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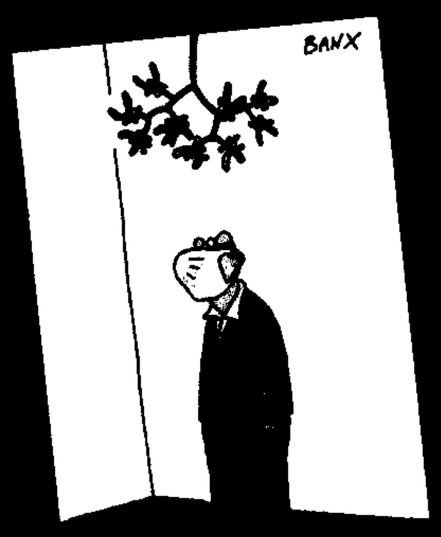

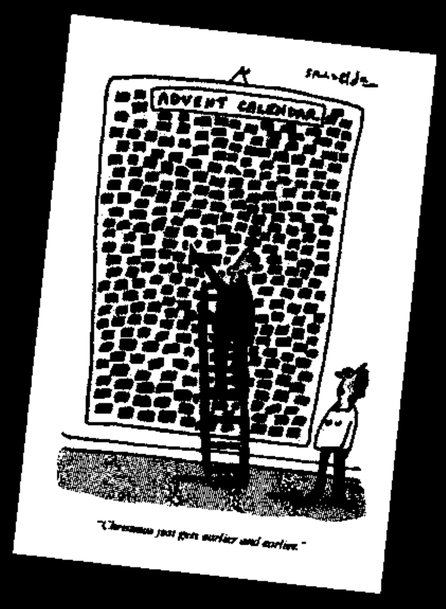

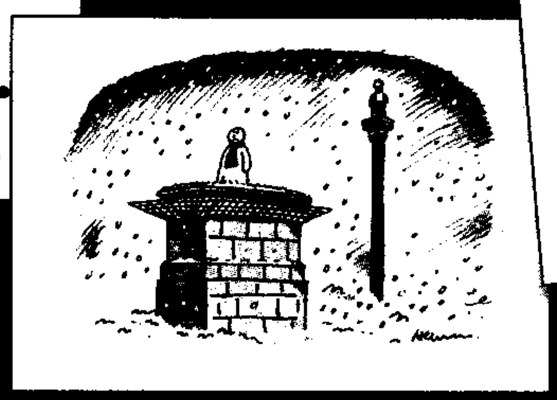

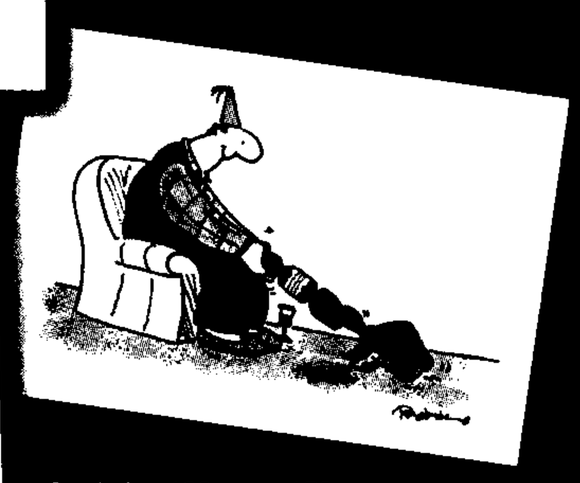

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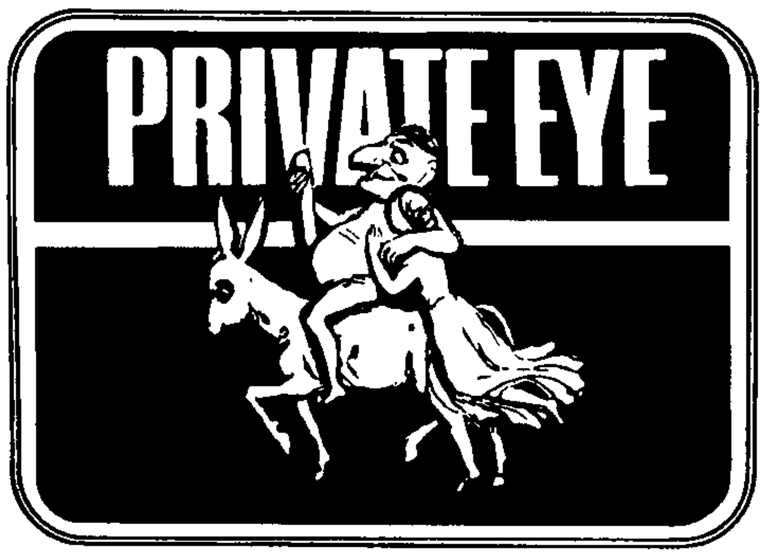

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"You just can't trust the post!"

CUT 'N' WASTE

IN THE big debate about public spending cuts, the most ruinous programme of all - the private finance initiative – remains oddly unmentionable. Why?

The future costs of PFI, currently estimated at, ahem, £246bn, can be ignored because they won't appear on government balance sheets and so the main parties remain committed to the scheme.

The curse of PFI is that it relies on private sector borrowing, which has always been more expensive than traditional public borrowing, but never more so than it is post-credit crunch. What's more, the bills for this and the services provided under a PFI contract are locked in for around 30 years, so when budgets are tight, a bad situation becomes far worse. A hospital's nurses and a school's teachers can be sacked but the PFI bills must be paid regardless.

As with any dodgy pyramid-scheme, the day of reckoning of course eventually arrives. And now it has done, with cuts demanded from public service budgets already crippled under the weight of 640 PFI deals signed since the mid-1990s – most of them under the "Enron Chancellor", Gordon Brown.

● *Those PFI costs in full: In the Back, p28.*

TROUGH CHOICES

THE big push on waste and inefficiency obviously demands that the country's top watchdogs get their heads together.

So it was in May that, just a fortnight after Alistair Darling's budget foreshadowed the dark days to come, a pow-wow was convened among the country's four top waste-busters: the chairman and chief executive of the Audit Commission, Michael O'Higgins and Steve Bundred; and their counterparts at the National Audit Office, chairman Sir Andrew Likierman and the then auditor-general Tim Burr.

And where better for the big four to hatch their plans for cutting the fat out of Whitehall, local government and the NHS than chic Italian restaurant Quirinale? Lunch for four came to £260, the tab picked up as ever by Johnny Taxpayer. How agreeable!

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ABC

EVERYTHING MUST GO!

THE TIME for futile gestures may be long past, but Gordon Brown wasn't going to miss the chance to make one following the Tories' spending-slashing performance in Manchester.

Hence his re-announcement on Monday of £16bn of public asset sales, including the Tote, student loans and local government property.

While these sales will reduce the government's debt, that's not the problem. (Brown and Darling consistently argue that the UK's debt is low by international standards.) The problem is the annual budget deficit, which the one-off receipts won't diminish by a single penny.

Not that this stopped business secretary Lord Mandelson presenting the sales as "a much better thing to do than savagely cutting public expenditure on schools, hospitals and other frontline services". In fact, through the loss of profits on assets such as the Tote and through having to pay more in PFI-style arrangements to the new private owners of public assets, the plan will actually end up *increasing* budget deficits.

Mandy's backing for the sale of local airports, meanwhile, will certainly raise eyebrows in Greater Manchester's Labour councils. Manchester Airports Group (MAG), jointly owned by Manchester city council and its neighbours, pays for many public services in the region. Even in 2008, a tough year for airports, the councils raked in a £26m dividend.

Previous recent suggestions of a sell-off to help fund local tram extensions were described as "sheer folly" by Manchester's council leader Richard Leese, who warned that the move could result in a 20 percent hike in council tax; while Salford leader John Merry said selling MAG could wreck the local economy.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"Some of us have other things to do with our time than read Private Eye."

*– **Ben Bradshaw**, secretary of state for culture, media and sport*

SHOULD the Conservatives win the general election, one of David Cameron's first tasks will be to appoint a phalanx of Tory peers to shift the balance in the House of Lords. So who does Dave have in mind?

A preliminary list of 32 possible new peers has already been prepared for the Lords appointments commission; and according to a source close to the process, it includes the names of both Daniel Finkelstein and Will "Thirsty" Lewis.

Finkelstein of course worked for the Conservative Research Department before becoming comment editor of the *Times*, and stood unsuccessfully as the Tory candidate in Harrow in 2001. But more surprising is the appearance of Lewis's name on the list. As editor of the *Telegraph*, he oversaw his paper's coverage of the MPs' expenses scandal which did so much to, er, enhance the standing of parliament.

As the *Eye* went to press, the Conservatives declined to comment on their proposed peers.

BLUE SKY THINKING

DAVID CAMERON's Tories have finally got their reward after years of cosying up to Rupert Murdoch and his son James, as the *Sun* announced on its front page that "Labour's Lost It".

The Dirty Digger always likes to back a winner, of course, but the Tories nevertheless had to earn his endorsement. The Murdochs made it plain what they expected in return – a government-in-waiting that understood their needs.

When James gave the MacTaggart Lecture to the Edinburgh TV Festival in August, he spelled out his worldview of British television and the hated BBC in particular. "Rather than concentrating on areas where the market is not delivering, the BBC seeks to compete head-on for audiences," he complained. The Beeb is too "dominant", the BBC Trust is "abysmal", the BBC's commercial division Worldwide is "egregious", and the busybody regulator Ofcom must be curbed.

The Tories have been making similar noises for months with David Cameron vowing in July that Ofcom, the scourge of Murdoch's Sky TV, "will cease to exist". But shadow culture secretary Jeremy Hunt made sure to ram home the point in the weeks after Murdoch's MacTaggart.

As he wrote in the *Sun* (naturally) on 19 September, instead of chasing ratings the BBC should focus on "what it does best – great family entertainment and programmes the market will not provide". Hunt added that he was pledging to "replace" the BBC Trust and "rein in the activities of its commercial arm, Worldwide" – all music to the Murdochs' ears. By 24 September, Kelvin MacKenzie was praising Hunt in the *Sun* as an "excellent Conservative culture minister". And less than a week later, after all that flirting and heavy petting, the relationship was consummated.

CAMERON SPELLS IT OUT

NEWS

EDUCASHUN NEWZ

AS more and more schools hand over their breakfast clubs and after-hours activities to private companies, should headteachers be allowed to have a personal stake in the companies using their premises?

In Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire, the local authority stepped in to investigate the School's Out club at Stubbings Infants School. The club is advertised on the school's website as "completely self-funding and relies on fees paid to run". According to Companies House, School's Out's only directors are Stubbings' headteacher Sarah Collins and her husband Kevin. Collins is also listed as 50 percent shareholder in the firm.

The internal row over the situation was hinted at in an Ofsted report back in February, which noted that "the governing body and the headteacher are at present not working effectively as a team. Unresolved disagreements over a number of issues are unfortunately distracting their attention from further school improvement."

But the inspectors provided no detail about the nature of the disagreements, which it has now emerged were over the firm's lack of a proper rental agreement for using school premises.

School's Out was paying just £300 a term in rent, and Calderdale council's investigation has also uncovered concerns about whether the firm had even appropriate insurance for the club. The after-school club is now being run by volunteers and Mrs Collins is currently off sick.

Since Ruth Kelly announced in 2005 that the "extended schools" scheme would use charities and private organisations to keep schools open from 8am to 6pm, without compelling teachers to provide clubs, hundreds of such out-of-hours club companies have been set up, ranging from single-school firms to large chains.

HONEY TRAP

SCIENTISTS at Warwick University investigating honey bee decline were given £1m this month to investigate "diseases, parasites and other stresses".

The cash came from the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) "in partnership with Syngenta", which is busy promoting its work on Operation Pollinator to create insect-friendly wildflower strips in seven European countries. All very lovely, but hold on: doesn't Syngenta produce exactly the kind of pesticides other researchers have fingered as one of the "other stresses" faced by bees (*Eyes passim*)?

Indeed it does. Syngenta makes Actara, the brand name for thiamethoxam, yet another kind of neonicotinoid pesticide known to be toxic to bees. A report by Washington State's agriculture department investigating 12 incidents of honey bee deaths in 2002 revealed that "in most cases, the application of thiamethoxam to pear orchards appears to have been responsible for killing honey bees that are essential for pollination". Can no one at the BBSRC see the possible conflict of interest?

NUMBER CRUNCHING

£12,500 Amount offered each year as salary by Baroness Scotland to housekeeper who turned out to be illegal immigrant

£38,300 Amount taken each year in allowance by Baroness Scotland to keep her house (on top of £113,000 salary)

Street Of Shame

A REMARKABLY soft-soap interview with the shifty lawyer David Mills, convicted of taking a bribe from Silvio Berlusconi, fills a page of the *Sunday Times* News Review.

When not cooing over his springer spaniel, interviewer Camilla Long notes that "he has five children" but somehow omits to mention a possibly salient fact: that a certain Eleanor Mills has recently joined the *Sunday Times* as associate editor.

Anyone wishing to know what she looks like need only glance at the opposite page of the section, where a picture byline adorns the new column by the selfsame Eleanor, David Mills's daughter.

THANKS to the *Sun*'s change of allegiance, "the Murdoch-government axis that has ruled us so wisely for 30 almost unbroken years will continue", writes Matthew Norman in the *Independent*. "The Eurotrash salon of Matthew Freud and Elisabeth Murdoch will remain the epicentre of influence."

Elsewhere in the *Indie*, Stephen Glover interprets the *Sun*'s switch as a victory for the Chipping Norton set, a ghastly group of chums with weekend cottages in Oxfordshire, whose members include Elisabeth Murdoch and Rebekah Brooks. The set, he adds, "is a state of mind reaching beyond the relatively narrow confines of Chipping Norton".

Wisely, both Norman and Glover omit to mention another prominent member of this vulgar clique, a goatee-bearded fun-lover who often hobnobs with Freud and Murdoch at his weekend cottage near Blenheim Palace and at their "Eurotrash salon" in London. Step forward Simon "Pussy" Kelner, managing director of the *Indie*!

THE *Sunday Times* couldn't resist a spot of sermonising when it discovered that leading BBC "talent" such as Jeremy Paxman and Fiona Bruce had set themselves up as freelances rather than staff.

"The device enables the BBC and its presenters to lower their tax bills legally, leaving the rest of the country to shoulder a larger burden."

But the financial load that the country has to bear because of Paxo's freelance status is nothing compared with the burden forced on it by the accounting tricks of a certain international media conglomerate which has, over the years, used more than 800 artificial subsidiaries in notorious tax havens such as the Cayman Islands to limit the corporation tax it should pay on billions of pounds of profits. For some reason, the paper finds it hard to summon up the same indignation, or indeed space, for this sly book-keeping by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp.

WAITROSE has pulled all its advertising from Rupert Murdoch's Fox News after some customers complained about the US channel's ultra-conservative presenter Glenn Beck, who claimed that Barack Obama is racist towards whites.

Says a Waitrose spokesman: "We take the placement of our ads in individual programmes very seriously, ensuring the content of these programmes is deemed appropriate for a brand with our values."

All most embarrassing for another branch of the Digger's empire, the *Times*, which has a marketing deal with Waitrose's website, Ocado, to supply every shopper with a free copy of the paper with each grocery delivery.

REPORTING on Lord Mandelson's speech to the Labour conference, the *Daily Mail*'s Ephraim Hardcastle column observed that Mandy's audience included "creepy PR man Roland Rudd, *Thunderbirds* puppet villain come to life", sitting alongside BBC business editor Robert Peston.

"Some wonder if public employee Peston is too close to fingers-in-every-pie Rudd," sniffed Ephraim. "Yesterday he was practically in his lap." Fingers in every pie, indeed! Rudd, the boss of Finsbury PR, is also a long-standing adviser to *Daily Mail* chairman Lord Rothermere.

Spin-doctors working for his lordship must expect this sort of treatment. Only last month the *Mail on Sunday* raised questions about Brown Lloyd James's links to the Libyan oil industry – despite the fact that BLJ's other clients include the *Mail* group.

KAMAL AHMED, former spin-doctor to Trevor Phillips, has one obvious qualification for his new job as business editor of the *Sunday Telegraph*: he and the thirsty *Telegraph* supremo Will Lewis have been mates since they both studied journalism at City University two decades ago.

As the day of his arrival loomed, however, hacks at the paper wondered how he would get round the fact that he has no experience as a business hack and knows little about the world of finance and commerce. The answer, as Ahmed made clear in his debut column, is to get his readers to do his thinking for him.

"I am going to try to 'share' my column with readers before it appears and reflect on what you tell me before coming to my conclusions," he shamelessly revealed, via his new Twitter feed. "It will be an invitation to share thoughts before I write on a subject that is germane."

No doubt this is what the *Telegraph* had in mind when it issued a press release promising that Ahmed's column will bring "a unique insight" and "a fresh perspective to how we look at business".

EXCITING developments at the *Daily Telegraph*, where the great "Beauty and the Breasts" rivalry between columnist Celia "The Beauty" Walden and Bryony "The Breasts" Gordon continues.

Walden has now gained the upper hand through a cunning tactic that ensures her articles get a more prominent position than Gordon's – posing for the camera wherever possible, preferably in a state of undress.

For her interview with Ozzy Osbourne last week she was snapped in a red bikini standing next to the ageing rock star in his swimming pool. And in another feature about the virtues of thigh-high boots, Walden was photographed in a series of full-length poses in a miniskirt. Grateful, gasping *Telegraph* executives were only too happy to run the photos as large as possible.

Gordon has had to resort to her *Telegraph* blog to remind them of her own ample charms. Writing about a German fashion magazine using fewer skinny models, she offers to "jiggle my breasts in joy", adding: "But that would probably disturb my colleagues." Surely that's the idea!

"I'll claim what I pay back on expenses"

NUMBER CRUNCHING

650km Range of missiles that 2002 government dossier incorrectly claimed Iraq had, in addition to "almost certainly seeking an indigenous ability to enrich uranium to the level needed for a nuclear weapon"

1300km Range of missiles Iran definitely does have, along with two uranium enrichment facilities

***FINANCIAL TIMES* managing editor Dan Bogler must have been on some kind of human resources course recently, judging by the exemplary professionalism he has shown *in motivating* hard-pressed sub-editors on his creaking rag.**

Bogler has responded to an NUJ chapel request for breaks of 20 minutes – per day, not per hour – by claiming that the hacks aren't working hard enough at the moment, and have such an easy life that any perks for the subs would enrage the news desk people, who toil longer and harder than their production colleagues without a whimper of complaint.

"Last night, I am told, some production folks were managing to surf the web and even read a book during their shifts," Bogbrush informed staff in an email. "So I don't buy your idea that subs who come in at 3pm don't look up from their screens until after 7pm. Second, we cannot have a top-down instituted break of 15 minutes after the Asian edition is completed, because the room would empty and, from experience, 15 minutes would turn into 20 and so forth."

Note that "I am told": Bogbrush isn't always around to see the evidence of a happy-go-lucky atmosphere for himself, as he realises, quite rightly, that he has a home to go to. But his comments have had an immediate effect.

"Why not put all your free time to good use by signing up for our subs' book club?" reads a flyer circulated to sub-editors last week. "Not only do you get the chance to read some of these Penguin classics when you have nothing else to do, but, as a Pearson employee, you also receive a recession-busting discount!" The first titles include *Heart of Darkness*, *Grimm's Fairy Tales* and *Les Misérables*.

"SHAMED Sir's Fling with Pupil, 17"; "Lesbian Miss Jailed for Sex with Girl"; "Kid Sex Bid Rap for Sir"; "Pervy Sir Gets Jail": if there's one thing that reading the *Sun* teaches you, it is that sex between pupils and teachers is Very Very Wrong.

Or is it? "Sexy ex-stripper Coco Lloyd has revealed she once bedded a teacher in a school classroom," the paper revealed breathlessly last week. "And the saucy member of *X Factor* group Kandy Rain said they were CAUGHT in the act by fellow pupils. Stunning blonde Coco – real name Vicky Lloyd – laughed: 'It was a bit of sex education for those kids'."

Readers wishing to know what such a scene might look like were invited to head for the paper's website, where they could view a video entitled "Naughty Newcomers Strip for the First Time, made in 2006 when Coco was just 18. It shows her peeling off her clothes and writhing around topless on a bed wearing only her knickers." All very educational, no doubt.

CONGRATULATIONS to the *Times* crossword setter.

Somehow they managed to smuggle the clue "Rupert ---, Media owner (7)" into the Times2 puzzle on 6 October – alongside "Earth Mover (6)." We salute you!

HOW JOURNALISM WORKS

SOME truths are evident in whatever language they are expressed, and you do not need to speak Italian to comprehend that "Il *Sunday Times*... riuscendo a scrivere un articolo pieno di errori."

This, at least, is the verdict of members of the Comitato Addiopizzo, a campaigning group based in Palermo that is encouraging shoppers in the region to boycott businesses that pay the "pizzo", or protection money, to the local mafia. They featured in an article by *Sunday Times* foreign correspondent Dan McDougall on 20 September, which, according to a statement posted on the English language section of the group's website, featured "a lot of big untruths, some of these are also ridicolous [sic]".

Such as? Er, "MEMBERS OF ADDIOPIZZO NEVER RECEIVED ANY DEATH THREATS... WE NEVER RECEIVED NEITHER LETTER BOMBS NOR OUR FAMILIES WERE THREATENED."

Anything else? Well, there was one woman, who was described as having a "personal mission" after "her uncle, a police officer who refused to take mafia bribes, was killed by a car bomb". But the group clarified this slightly. "NO CERVILLA'S UNCLE WAS KILLED BY MAFIA, AND NO UNCLE OF HERS IS A POLICEMAN, TOO."

McDougall quoted another member of the group claiming the mafia "threatened to kidnap my nephews on their way back from school" if she didn't hand over some of the proceeds of her family's fashion store. According to the group, "SHE AND HER FAMILY HAVEN'T ANY FASHION STORE. BESIDES, SHE HASN'T ANY NEPHEWS."

As for the paper's claims that the group "don't have the police on our side, as many of them are bought off by the Cosa Nostra", "IT'S NOT TRUE. WE ARE STRONGLY SUPPORTED BY THE POLICE, WHO WORKS WITH A HIGH PROFESSIONALISM... WE OWE THEM SO MUCH."

So what has the *Sunday Times*'s reaction been to this litany of complaints? "We wrote to the main editors emails, asking for a correction," Francesco Galante of Addiopizzo tells the *Eye*. "Of course we didn't get any response."

EVEN though the *Guardian* had already apologised for its July claim that Liam Gallagher had flounced off stage during an Oasis concert (he actually came back two songs later), the singer still fired off a writ for libel against the paper at the end of last month.

Which veteran rock 'n' roller has Gallagher employed to protect his reputation? None other than Carter-Fuck. Sadly, it appears that the lawyers' music knowledge may be somewhat lacking. According to *Press Gazette*, "Carter-Ruck filed the writ on the singer's behalf claiming the allegations could deter people from going to future Oasis concerts."

As even the crustiest of high court judges may have noticed, Gallagher's brother Noel walked out on the band in August and a string of planned concerts was abandoned. "Oasis is no longer. I think we all know that... We ended Oasis," Liam confirmed last week.

"MAILONLINE has chosen not to show the portrait of naked 10-year-old Brooke Shields to be exhibited at Tate Modern," the *Daily Mail*'s website loftily intoned on 30 September.

Instead, to illustrate its story the paper offered a still from film *The Blue Lagoon* of a topless Shields when she was... 14 years old!

Once police had moved in to remove the photograph of Shields from the Tate the following day, paedophiles had to look elsewhere for their jollies. MailOnline obliged on 7 October with a photoshoot with 14-year-old Alex Dalby in the "Miss Sexy" branded trousers she was banned from wearing to school, turning her bottom to the camera so that readers could witness how they are "unduly tight because they show off the students' underwear when their jumpers aren't on."

"FOUL language has become so common that a third of us hear a swear word every five minutes," chunters columnist Ann Widdecombe in the *Daily Express*.

"The media are hardly blameless as it is almost impossible to get through an evening's television viewing without hearing 'strong' language on the screen. Strong, of course, is a euphemism for disgusting but the trendies who produce the offending programmes would not know the meaning of the word disgusting."

Recent highlights from Television X, the station owned by Ms Widdecombe's trendy employer Richard Desmond? Er, C**k Sandwich, British Hotel B**ches, Fetish Wh**es, My Mum's A Sl**.

CONSIDER the three following statements, juxtaposed on the cover of last week's OK! magazine:

- "'Yes I do have a new woman in my life': Peter Andre Reveals Love Affair – World Exclusive"
- "Katie Price: 'Alesha Dixon is Welcome to Pete.'"
- "Alesha Dixon Exclusive: 'Why this is the best thing that's happened to me.'"

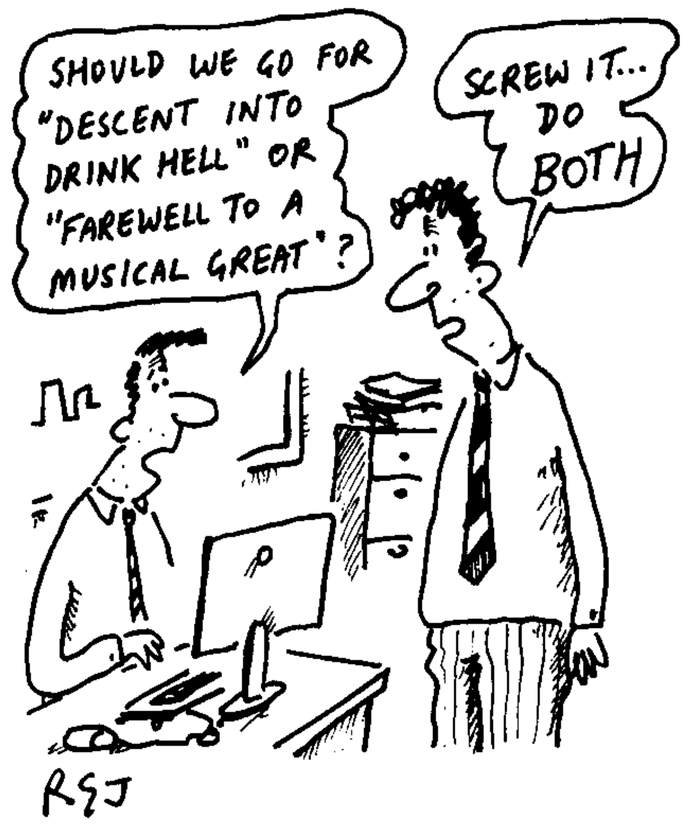
Now consider the three following statements, contained within last week's *OK!* magazine:

- Peter Andre: "I want to stay single. Why does everyone want to fix me up? I won't be getting involved with anyone in a rush. I'm proud to say I'm happily single."
- Katie Price: "I hear Pete has the hots for Alesha. She is gorgeous, so I wouldn't blame him if he did try it on with her."
- "Alesha Dixon has told pals that landing the role as a judge on *Strictly Come Dancing* was 'the best thing that has ever happened to me.'"

Now, using your skill and judgement, answer the following two questions:

a) Is Peter Andre going out with Alesha Dixon?
b) When will *OK!* publisher Richard Desmond be prosecuted – again – under the Trading Standards Act?

Stephen Gately – The Tabloid Slant



Guides delighted with their rubbish award

Isle of Wight County Press

QUESTIONS tabled by Paul Farrelly, MP for Newcastle-under-Lyme, which Jack Straw is due to answer this week:

"To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the Court of Appeal judgment in May 2009 in the case of Michael Napier and Irwin Mitchell v Pressdram Limited in respect of press freedom to report proceedings in court.

"To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of legislation to protect (a) whistleblowers and (b) press freedom following the injunctions obtained in the High Court by (i) Barclays and Freshfields solicitors on 19 March 2009 on the publication of internal Barclays reports documenting alleged tax avoidance schemes and (ii) Trafigura and Carter-Ruck solicitors on 11 September 2009 on the publication of the Minton report on the alleged dumping of toxic waste in the Ivory Coast, commissioned by Trafigura.

"To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, if he will (a) collect and (b) publish statistics on the number of non-reportable injunctions issued by the High Court in each of the last five years."

NOW that the Tories look likely to win a general election, some of the party's old sweats are emerging from the swamp to fish for jobs.

Chris Patten – or Lord Patten of Barnes, as the old boy styles himself these days – is one of them. He has vouchsafed an interview to *The House* magazine (a Westminster publication) and says: "If anything ever came my way after the age of 65 nationally or internationally, I'd regard it as a fantastic bonus."

The job he seems particularly keen on is EU foreign minister – a new post likely to be set up once the Lisbon treaty is fully ratified. "I wouldn't campaign for it," drawls Patten, who is far too grand for that sort of thing. "But if I was offered it, it is a serious and big job."

LABOUR has turned to another celebrity chef to sort out the disastrous food on offer in hospitals, nine years after Tony Blair appointed Loyd Grossman to lead the Department for Health's "Better Hospital Food" programme.

As with so many of Blair's gimmicky initiatives, that campaign achieved little and was quietly dropped in 2006. Catering staff had complained that it was impossible to produce Grossman's more imaginative dishes with a budget of around £2 a day per patient. But now Heston Blumenthal, co-owner of the three Michelin-starred Fat Duck restaurant in Bray, Berkshire, is to work with the NHS and Reading University to improve hospital food.

Blumenthal, who says he has been looking at ways to "rejuvenate the dining environment in hospital and improve the flavour of food in the mouth" (er, where else?), is famous for his snail porridge and bacon and egg ice cream. But he gained much unwelcome coverage earlier this year when some 500 Fat Duck customers fell ill after eating contaminated oysters. Just the man to be Gordon Brown's new hospital food tsar!

LITTLE separates Tory and Labour plans to deal with lengthening dole queues: both believe that private companies can make a better fist of welfare-to-work than the job centre. The only snag is that they don't.

While firms such as A4e, Calder Holdings BV, Max Employment UK Ltd, Seetec and Serco have made fortunes by landing lucrative New Deal contracts (replaced this month by Labour's "Flexible New Deal"), the same cannot be said for those they were supposed to be helping back into employment.

Department for Work and Pensions data shows that the flagship training and support programmes run by the private sector for the long-term unemployed aged over 25 have failed. Only 2 percent of firms involved in the Intensive Activity Period (IAP) scheme reached their target of 40 percent of entrants finding a job. Delivery of the Basic Employability Training (BET) programme has also been lamentable, with 77 percent of providers falling short of their target to get 25 percent of entrants into work. The Environment Task Force (EFT) scheme target of 45 percent of entrants finding work was not reached by 85 percent of those "delivering" it.

The failure is just as acute for the under-25s. Of those firms delivering Gateway to Work (GtW), a two-week intensive training programme for 18- to 24-year-olds, a pathetic 4 percent hit their target of helping 45 percent of entrants into jobs.

However, such is the faith Labour places in the private sector to deliver welfare-to-work programmes that the Flexible New Deal actually *raised* the targets from 45 percent to 50 percent. With pleas by the DWP select committee to ministers to lower targets ignored, the failure of the "Flexible New Deal" is all but guaranteed.

TOUGH times at one of the government's main IT suppliers, Fujitsu, as it cuts 1,200 jobs, many of them former civil servants running services it has taken over from government.

Times aren't too tough, however, for the firm to give freebies to those who are in a position to throw some of the taxpayer's cash back at it. Hence the deal announced by the company – which runs IT less than perfectly at HM Revenue & Customs and has just won a deal at the Treasury, among other government clients – to sponsor the Commons & Lords rugby team for the 2009/10 season!

Fujitsu's marketing director for government business, Simon Carter, claims this is "an important opportunity to increase the visibility of the Fujitsu brand with members of both Houses". And indeed it will, as honourable and noble members take to the field for matches in Edinburgh, Dublin and Paris sporting the Fujitsu logo across their toned torsos.

The team captain, Labour MP Andy Reed, said he was looking forward to "cementing what is a long-standing relationship between the government and the company". IT spending is officially on all the political parties' lists of areas to cut, but what will the parliamentary rugger buggers have to say about that?

NUMBER CRUNCHING

£40,000 Expenses claimed by Lord Paul for a one-bedroom flat in Oxfordshire designated as his main home, in which he never slept

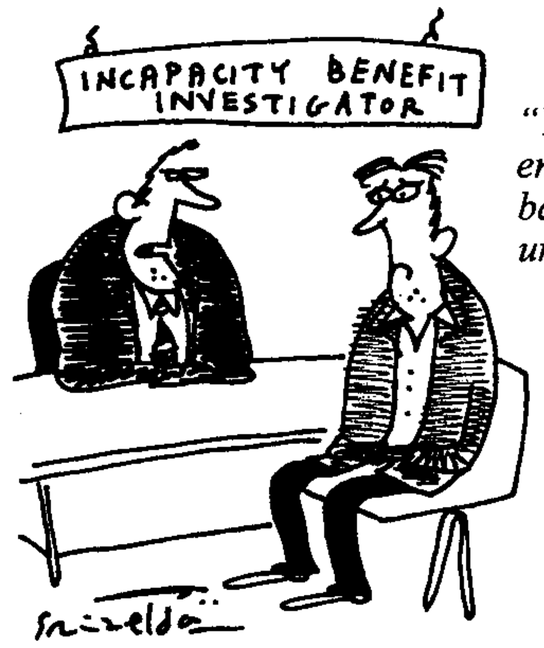
40 Years the millionaire peer has lived in central London, within walking distance of House of Lords

£400,000 Amount he has donated to Labour

CLIMATE CHANGE LATEST

DODS, the political events company and publisher of epolitix.com, ran its usual fringe events at this year's party conferences, a popular topic being climate change. It even arranged a mini-roadshow for the three major parties, billed as a panel discussion on "Delivering a Low Carbon Future".

One man who could legitimately claim to be an expert on this topic is Tom Burke, whose career highlights include running Friends of the Earth and the Green Alliance, advising three environment secretaries, being a visiting professor at Imperial College, advising the Foreign Office on climate strategy and receiving numerous awards and accolades, including a CBE, for his efforts.



"Your're well enough to go back to being unemployed"

Mr Burke has been a strong voice against the expansion of nuclear power, preferring emerging technologies such as carbon capture and storage, and he has advocated massive investment in other clean technologies. Dods duly invited him to be a panellist at the three events and he was pleased to accept.

Shortly before the Liberal Democrats congregated in Bournemouth, however, Burke received a hugely embarrassed email. The organisers at Dods were terribly sorry, they said, but he was no longer needed as a speaker and was summarily, er, disinvited from all three party conference events.

How could this be? Had someone intervened behind the scenes? A clue may be the corporate sponsor of the conference meetings – EDF Energy, the French energy giant that is a leading contender to build Britain's new generation of nuclear power stations. Presumably EDF Energy didn't want to be embarrassed by an authority on climate change at its own event – especially not when its own communications director Andrew Brown has been so successful in persuading his brother, one Gordon Brown, of the benefits of nuclear power!

Mr Burke was also due to speak at the TUC Congress on a platform with climate and energy secretary Ed Miliband, again on how to deliver a low carbon future. Even though the event wasn't sponsored by EDF, shortly beforehand he was disinvited from this too. It seems the Labour machine is working hard to make sure Burke's views on nuclear receive as little airing as possible.

LABOUR'S LAST DANCE

AS LABOUR conference delegates danced what may be their last dance as the party of government, they were dancing to the tune of airports firm BAA and defence training privatiser Metrix.

The party's eastern regional reception was paid for by BAA, which going by previous years means the airport firm will appear as a donor to the tune of £10,000 or so. Labour has made strong efforts to appear green in order to attract newer, younger and more enthusiastic delegates. Taking cash from an airports giant spoils the environmental window dressing somewhat. BAA's sponsorship did not appear in the conference programme, suggesting it stepped in at the last minute to help the party out of an embarrassing financial hole.

The reception for Welsh delegates, meanwhile, was paid for by Metrix, the firm behind the £12bn privatisation of defence training, a scheme of questionable value (*Eyes passim*). Metrix also appears to have stepped in at the last moment as its name is not in the programme either.

The two companies' donations should appear in the next returns posted by the Electoral Commission, along with funding for other Labour conference events by Canary Wharf, Bloomberg, Tesco, Asda, Scottish Power and the arms firm EADS (see also *"A Crawl to Arms"*).

THE TORIES IN MANCHESTER

Crawl to arms

THE arms industry tried hard to make a splash at the Tory conference, mindful perhaps of recent reports that claimed shadow chancellor George Osborne was committed to cutting wasteful military programmes. But the lesson from Manchester was that they did not need to bother: Conservative enthusiasm for the arms trade is strong.

At a meeting paid for by the Defence Industries Council, shadow defence minister Gerald Howarth sat next to BAE Systems spin doctor Bob Keen and declared: "People who decry the defence industry should hang their heads in shame because it is a noble industry". For good measure he added that it was "Britain's most successful manufacturing industry" and told delegates he could accept "minister for war" as a title should the Tories enter government in 2010.

Howarth was joined by Ben Wallace MP, a former executive of arms firm QinetiQ, who argued that the defence industry did not bear any responsibility for problems facing soldiers in the field. "Let's not forget it's the Taliban killing our troops, not the absence of a particular bit of kit," he said.

Howarth restated his praise for the arms industry alongside shadow defence secretary Liam Fox at another fringe meeting, this one organised by the Tory military think tank "First Defence" and sponsored by arms firm EADS. First Defence director Caroline Flynn-MacLeod introduced Fox and Howarth but first offered thanks to EADS "for their support on our long march to power", praising "a company that stuck with us so long".

Bizarrely, it was left to the arms industry itself to point out its failings. Robin Southwell, chairman of EADS, closed the meeting promising that the industry would become "more determined" and less "part of the lethargy". Southwell also offered thanks that "no one mentioned the A400M – I'm sure it will fly soon." The A400M, a large transport plane made by EADS, was supposed to replace the Hercules and help transport troops and equipment into Afghanistan this year. But the plane doesn't work properly yet, may not be strong enough to carry a typical armoured vehicle and won't be in service until at least 2012.

EADS is also a partner in the Future Strategic Tanker PFI, a scheme that is supposed to replace the ageing, second-hand jets the RAF uses to refuel combat aircraft over Afghanistan and fly troops into theatre. Arguments over prices and PFI problems mean the RAF is still waiting for these aircraft, even though they were supposed to be available two years ago. The fact that the shadow defence secretary had nothing to say about problems with two key military schemes even when he was in the same room as the company's boss, on a platform paid for by the firm, suggests the Tories will be no better at getting value from the arms industry than the current government.

Power struggle

AT the conference the Tories seemed keen to pick up the contaminated nuclear baton from Labour too.

Shadow energy spokesman Charles Hendry not only appeared on a platform sponsored by EDF Energy (which hopes to build Britain's next generation of nuclear power stations – *see Climate change latest, facing page*), but also on one paid for by rival wannabe nuclear generator, Eon.

Hendry even praised former Labour energy minister John Hutton for erecting the "big nuclear tent" and was joined at the EDF breakfast by Labour's nuclear waste adviser, Tim Stone, as well as an EDF spokesman.

The Conservatives say they want new nuclear power stations but will not subsidise them. However, future storage of waste is key to any new nuclear programme, and unless the government (of whichever hue) builds an underground storage facility and agrees to accept waste at a cost acceptable to the industry, the new power generators will simply not be built.

As Hendry said, the lights might start going out in 2017, so the nuclear industry has a lot of bargaining power; and low waste storage costs could become a massive hidden subsidy for it. Over bacon sandwiches Stone suggested to the Conservatives that the public sector has to bear the liabilities of strategic industries, and that some companies are too big or too important to fail. Just like the banks, in other words, the power firms are in line to pass their losses and failures on to taxpayers.

Board stiffs

WHILE delegates and speakers at last year's Tory conference seemed genuinely shaken by the financial crisis, in Manchester they appeared to have bounced back. A meeting on "The Age of Responsibility", arranged by the Reform think-tank and featuring Francis Maude, showed how far they have recovered.

Maude is a key figure in the Cameron team, running the "implementation unit" that prepares shadow ministers for government. Reform, one of the key Tory-linked think-tanks, is funded by privatisation firms such as InterHealth, Sodexo, Capita and Group 4.

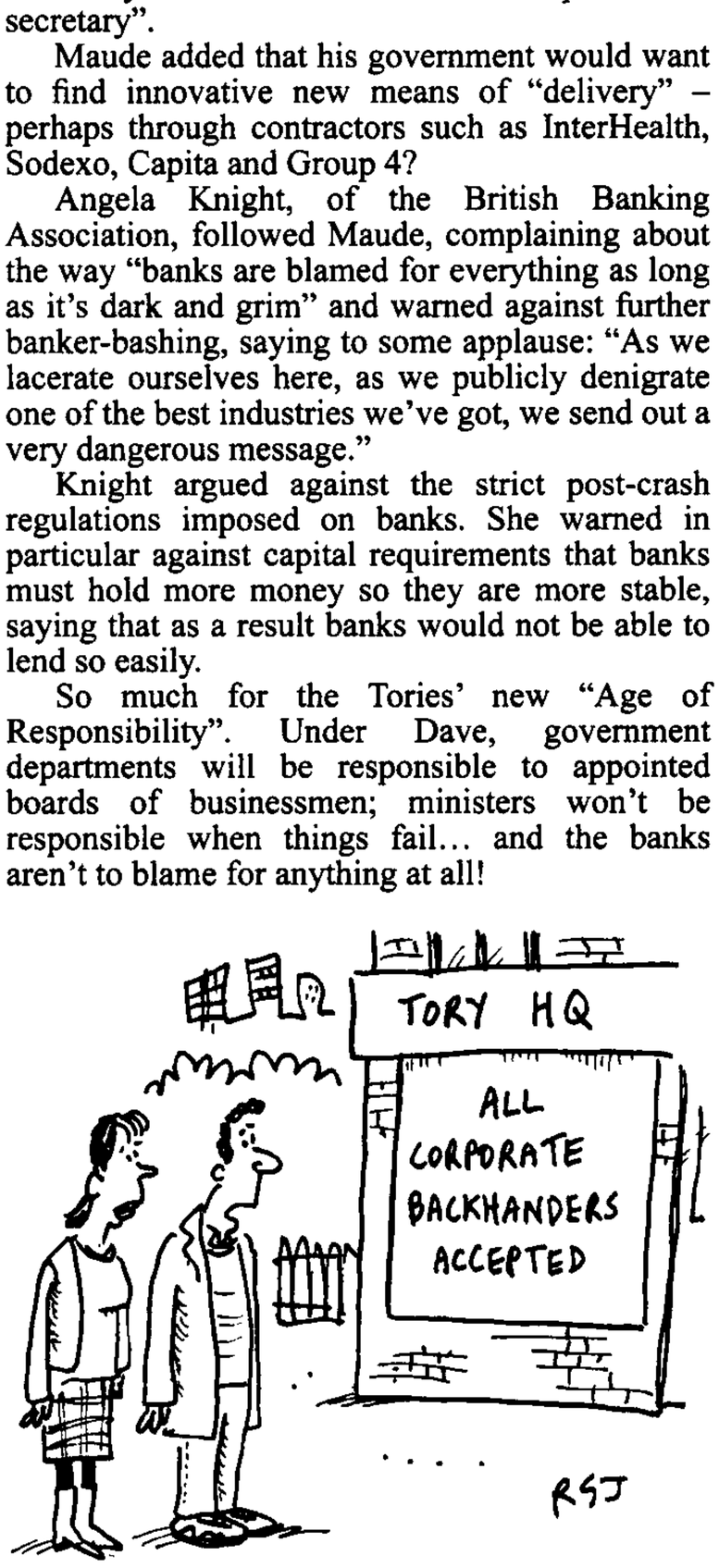
Maude argued in favour of building on Labour reforms, including strengthening the boards the government has set up to oversee Whitehall departments. He said that under the Conservatives these boards would have non-executives, "a majority of whom will be from the private sector", with influential powers, including the duty to regularly "appraise the permanent secretary". If necessary "this board can remove the permanent secretary".

Maude added that his government would want to find innovative new means of "delivery" – perhaps through contractors such as InterHealth, Sodexo, Capita and Group 4?

Angela Knight, of the British Banking Association, followed Maude, complaining about the way "banks are blamed for everything as long as it's dark and grim" and warned against further banker-bashing, saying to some applause: "As we lacerate ourselves here, as we publicly denigrate one of the best industries we've got, we send out a very dangerous message."

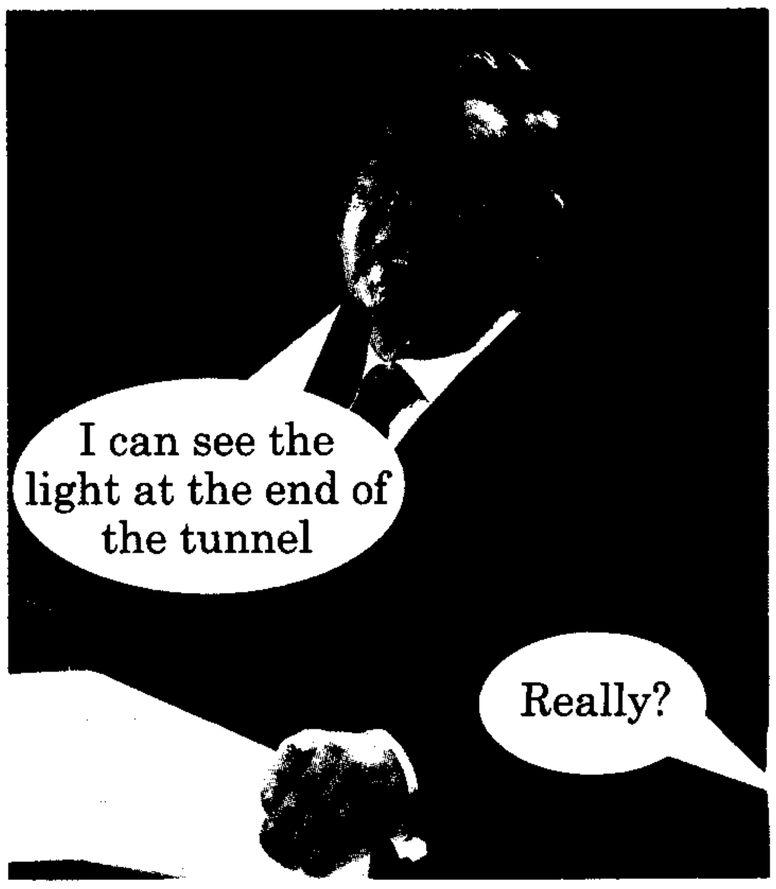
Knight argued against the strict post-crash regulations imposed on banks. She warned in particular against capital requirements that banks must hold more money so they are more stable, saying that as a result banks would not be able to lend so easily.

So much for the Tories' new "Age of Responsibility". Under Dave, government departments will be responsible to appointed boards of businessmen; ministers won't be responsible when things fail… and the banks aren't to blame for anything at all!



"Looks like they're ready for government"

GORDON'S VISION



NEWS FROM THE DEPOT

WHEN the Territorial Army celebrated its 100th anniversary on 1 April 2008, Des "Swiss Toni" Browne, the then defence secretary, publicly thanked the 35,000 men and women serving in the TA as "an integral part of our defence effort". Note the word "integral".

The Chief of the General Staff at the time, Sir Richard Dannatt, added his own tribute: "Territorials receive the same training and equipment as their regular counterparts and, even as we speak, are sharing the demands and rewards of operational service in Iraq and Afghanistan."

This sharing of "demands" and, er, "rewards" has meant TA soldiers facing the same kit deficiencies, extended tours of duty away from families and similar casualties in proportion to their numbers as some regular units. Now, just 18 months after the praise, the MoD has decided to put TA training on hold for six months to save £20m; a paltry sum when compared to the cost of, say, a single Typhoon air superiority fighter, which runs to £140m. The MoD says it's a clumsy comparison, but given that the RAF is going to mothball 90 of the pointless Typhoons as soon as they are delivered, it's apt.

This decision effectively ends the notion that the TA is integral to the British army, despite spurious efforts by the ministry to insist that training for those being sent on ops will be ring-fenced.

Currently, reservists complete phase 1 and phase 2 of basic training in their own units, before being sent to join regular units for the more advanced PDT, or pre-deployment training. These reservists have to reach a basic standard before they start PDT, including weapons handling, medical training and the disciplines to follow fire control orders and effective movement on the battlefield, or "chalk face", as "Hapless" Bob Ainsworth prefers to call it.

In six months' time, those skills will be lost. TA recruits will be totally unprepared for the transition to PDT and as a result will be far more likely to end up as casualties.

The Reserve Forces Act of 1996 gave the defence secretary new powers to call out the TA for duty without resorting to a Queen's Order to do so. The law was used in 2001-02 to boost troop numbers in Afghanistan. Now the TA has had its opportunity to provide basic training for these troops removed at a stroke, at a time when 850 reservists are serving overseas, including 700 members of the TA, more than at any time since the Korean War.

'Squarebasher'

TV

When Boris Met Dave (More 4)

IF David Cameron wins the next election, he will be the first former television press officer to become prime minister.

In ordinary circumstances this might be thought quite good for broadcasting, as television policy would finally be in the hands of a premier with an understanding of the medium. Sadly, though, it won't work out like that. Dave was employed as spin-doctor for the worst ITV company there has ever been: Carlton.

Replacing the legendary Thames under Thatcher's competitive bidding for franchises, this trash factory was routinely ridiculed by the BBC, ITV and the then-nascent media pages. This was Cameron's only ever experience of being treated like an oik and has, improbably for an Old Etonian from a landed family, left him with a chip on his shoulder about being the victim of snobbery. Hence his determination to carve up the BBC and wipe the smiles off the faces of those TV playground bullies.

On this basis, the privatisation or sale to James Murdoch of Channel 4 now seems pretty much assured. Certainly More 4, one of the network's digital sisters, can expect to have its transmitter jammed after putting out the most miscalculated programme about a senior political figure since the BBC screened *Yesterday's Men* during the Wilson years.

When Boris Met Dave had been pre-publicised (possibly by some wily future politician in the Cameron tradition in the More 4 press office) as a drama about Cameron and Johnson's Oxford years, with lots of publicity shots of actors in frock coats and, in the case of the bloke playing BoJo, a ridiculous blonde fright-wig, re-creating the notorious photo of the Bullingdon Club members in 1987. The implication was that this would be a contemporary equivalent of *The Deal*, Peter Morgan's brilliant biopic about Labour's experience of two ambitious political contemporaries who both wanted to be prime minister.

As it turned out, though, this was not a drama-doc but a bog-standard doc – with lots of talking-head contributions from biographers – with intermittent slices of drama, in which actors who didn't look at all like the originals delivered lines which

TV election debate

didn't sound like them at all.

One reason for this was that *The Deal* had Peter Morgan behind the dialogue, while *When Boris Met Dave* had Toby Young (also the show's executive producer) and his old crony Lloyd Evans. Bizarrely, although these two are pushily aspiring playwrights, the script was also credited to a long list of other writers who, given that the dramatic scenes were so few, must have written a couple of words each.

Admittedly, the big difficulty for a film called *When Boris Met Dave* was that Boris and Dave scarcely met at all in the period being dramatised. Despite overlapping at Eton, they seem not to have encountered each other there, a peculiarity which a conventional documentary might have explained but this one couldn't, as it had failed to secure any access to people who knew them at school. The story of Cam's near-expulsion for dope-smoking, for example, was recounted entirely by his biographers.

Although we don't know what Blair and Brown said at the notorious Granita dinner, we do know that they went there, but this piece was always struggling to make the facts fit the concept. Boris and Dave seem scarcely to have met at Oxford either, so the film was reduced to clunky scenes of Cameron playing air guitar in his rooms while Johnson spouted Latin to pretty young things who were required to do his washing for him.

Unable to stand up the title they'd sold to More 4, the producers spent much of the 75 minutes desperately filling in with others who were up at Oxford then. Hack James Delingpole spoke for what seemed like hours about his own social insecurities and even got to be dramatised himself as a *Brideshead* fop with boater and teddy bear. The best of this filling was Rachel Johnson, who, eye-poppingly, offered all the most unflattering opinions and anecdotes about her brother.

One bonus of the doc was that it kept flashing up on screen the Bullingdon photo, which has been widely reported to have been withdrawn by the photographer, so that newspapers now usually use artists' impressions of it. But there was no way of knowing if Young and his chums had cleverly found a way round the restrictions on the picture or were simply winging it in ignorance of copyright law.

The film was certainly inept enough for the latter explanation. At one point, it bizarrely seemed to explain the fact that Young (who included himself as a contributor) had facial injuries now by showing him falling off his bike 22 years ago.

The show did, though, get close to David Cameron's career in one respect. It was a programme crap enough to have been made by Carlton.

'Remote Controller'

AD NAUSEAM

THE pronouncements of Martin "Shorty" Sorrell, chief executive of advertising group WPP, are treated with something approaching oracular reverence in adland. Yet the industry's self-appointed soothsayer is beginning to look a bit of a Mystic Mogg.

In January, speaking at an International Advertising Association event, Sorrell, who likes shapes, predicted that 2009 would be "a flat year" for global advertising. Everyone should calm down, said the man for whom a flat year would in the end have been a real bonus. "We don't see it as bad as Goldman and others who talk about minus 5 percent."

In fact, the global advertising market fell by 6.8 percent in the first half of 2009 – a decline Sorrell might call "small-cliff-shaped".

At the same event Shorty talked about the newspaper business, saying the continued decline of the industry was inevitable because of free content on the internet. "The seeds of this problem were sown when the people who created the new media industry decided to give it away for nothing. It's impossible now to take it up. You can start up here [high] and take your pricing down, but you can't start there [free] and start moving it up."

Yet last week, the impossible had become possible, with Sorrell telling another industry event, this time in Greece, that it was "absolutely correct to try and get people paying for content".

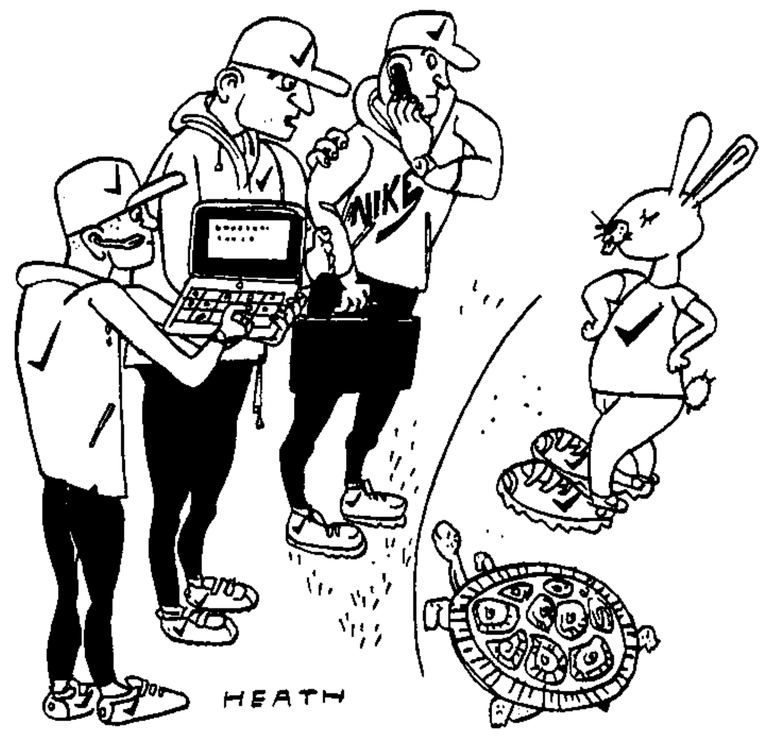
Why the turnaround? Could the comments of one R. Murdoch that his newspapers were going to start charging for online content, have had anything to do with it?

THE *Times* has been trumpeting its science journalism in a series of ads on London's Underground.

One ad features an ice-breaker butting its way through the picture, alongside the words: "Climate change has allowed the Northeast Passage to be used as a commercial shipping route for the first time." It ends: "To help you navigate the changing world we have more dedicated science and environment correspondents than the *Guardian*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail* or *Independent*."

Oops! As multiple bloggers were swift to note, the Northeast Passage, which links Europe with Asia via the Arctic Circle, has been being used as a commercial shipping route since 1934. The idea that it has somehow been recently conquered has only gained in the last month, since a German shipping company made the bogus claim in a press release.

The BBC, the *Independent* and, yes, the *Times* picked up on the non-story and dutifully trotted it out. But only the *Times* made it the centrepiece of an ad campaign about the depth of its science and environment reporting.



"Now, are we sure marketing has got this right?"

DUMB BRITAIN

The Weakest Link, BBC1 **Anne Robinson:** What is the name of the Archbishop of Canterbury who compiled the first Book of Common Prayer?

Contestant: Samuel Pepys.

AR: Gordon Brown compared himself to which literary character from Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights?

Contestant: Charles Dickens.

AR: In Russian literature, the author of *Dr Zhivago* was Boris what?

Contestant: Karloff.

O·B·N

She [Cheryl Cole] turned her pain into compassion, but when she cries, as she does often on *The X Factor*, she appears to feel people's pain, and we can feel hers: that's the connection. That's why an artist painted the Angel of the North with her face on it. She looked almost Diana-like.

CHRISSIE ILEY
***Sunday Times* Magazine**

Submitted by Steve Turner.

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

THE £10bn "Value for Money" outsourcing of telephones and computer systems to Siemens (*Eyes passim*) continues to enrage BBC News staff as they struggle to put programmes on air without working phones, computers or lights.

Latest victims are the scores of producers who find themselves inexplicably locked out of their computers, having logged on in the hope of filing news copy.

Siemens Service Management was quick to acknowledge reports of the new problem, sending an email to those affected: "If you are unable to log in, please call the Service Desk who will unlock your account," it said.

Alas, Siemens failed to spot that anybody who might have needed their email advice would not have been able to log in to read it.

GOING LIVE

MARK STONE of Sky News was on the spot outside the Majorca home of the deceased Stephen Gately at 8am on Monday, ready to inform viewers of the latest developments: "I don't think we'll hear anything today, it is after all a bank holiday here," he offered helpfully.

A FOOTNOTE to the great Jeremy Paxman underpants story.

Having famously complained to M&S boss Stuart Rose about the lack of gusset support in M&S underwear, Paxo found himself invited to lunch by Rose to discuss the matter.

Rose, who had lost serious volumes of sales in the ensuing media brouhaha, did not just provide lunch. He also laid on a well-endowed Dutch male model to appear in the latest M&S underpants – which the model did in diminishing order of coverage, starting with the roomy boxer and ending with the minimal thong.

Paxo was apparently somewhat stunned, particularly with the final, er, display, and had some problem finishing his food. Revenge served cold, apparently.

MODESTY BLAZE

What's been your proudest-ever moment?

CT: With *Millionaire*, it's not just the most successful show I've ever done, it's the most successful show anyone has ever done, it's in 115 countries and still growing. – **Chris Tarrant**, *Celebs on Sunday (Sunday Mirror). Submitted by Francis Harvey.*

NUMBER CRUNCHING

25 Years after being elected president that Jimmy Carter had to wait before getting Nobel peace prize

10 Months after being elected president that Barack Obama had to wait before getting Nobel peace prize

NUMBER CRUNCHING

3 Hundred and forty-six pounds was the average weekly pay of a postman last year

3 Hundred and twenty one million pounds was the profit of Royal Mail last year

3 Million pounds was the pay packet of chief executive Adam Crozier last year, including two bonuses

3 Thousand pounds is the price Royal Mail started charging businesses to receive their post before noon this year

3 Pence is the rise in price of first-class stamps next year

REWRITING HISTORY

***HISTORY Today* is, it likes to boast, "the world's premier, and probably oldest, history magazine", carrying "essays on all periods, regions and themes of history, many of them by the world's leading scholars."**

Having contributed to the magazine since the early 1990s, historian Dr A.D. Harvey was slightly surprised to find some suggested additions to an article on Austrian dictator Engelbert Dollfuss for the magazine's July issue this year, when the page proofs were sent for his approval by editor Paul Lay.

He was even more surprised when he did some digging, and discovered that three passages inserted into the text had been lifted word-for-word from the Wikipedia entry on Dollfuss.

"The piece inserted into your piece from Wikipedia, and subsequently removed at your request, was intended to add background information. There is no disagreement over the factual accuracy of this information," sniffed *History Today*'s publisher Andy Patterson when Dr Harvey contacted him to complain.

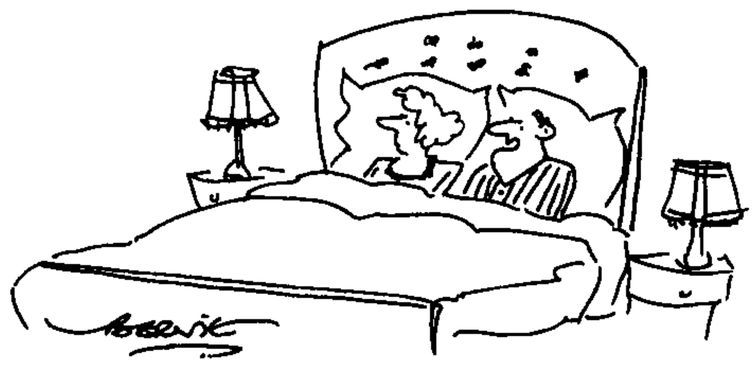
Polanskiballs

"Polanski has atoned for the sins of his young years. He has paid for it by not being able to make films in Hollywood."

JACEK BROMSKI (Polish Filmmakers Association), Associated Press
(Graham Veale)

"No one is saying Roman is above the law... We're denouncing the form – the fact that he was arrested on his way to an international festival."

THIERRY FREMAUX (Swiss Film Festival), *Guardian*
(Rhoda Koenig)



*"There was **nothing** on the telly tonight. We watched for 5 hours solid – nothing!"*

ARTS ABOUT FACE

LOOPY culture secretary Ben Bradshaw is a busy boy at the moment, a-tweeting and a-bleating all the livelong day. Yet he found time last week to try to sabotage the Tory conference by vetoing Boris Johnson's choice of former *Evening Standard* editor Veronica Wadley to chair the London branch of the Arts Council.

"Boris Johnson 'broke rules' by proposing ally for top London job," revealed Sam Coates of the *Times*, who was leaked the story by sources not a million miles from Bradshaw's office. Boris, according to Coates, recommended Wadley for the job even though one member of the interviewing panel judged that "she was insufficiently qualified to take the role".

Arts council supremo Dame Liz Forgan, who sat on the panel, had written to Bradshaw's department, the DCMS, to say that Wadley got the job for "reasons other than the selection of the best candidate" – ie through political cronyism. Bradshaw duly blocked her appointment, on the grounds that the process breached the Nolan rules.

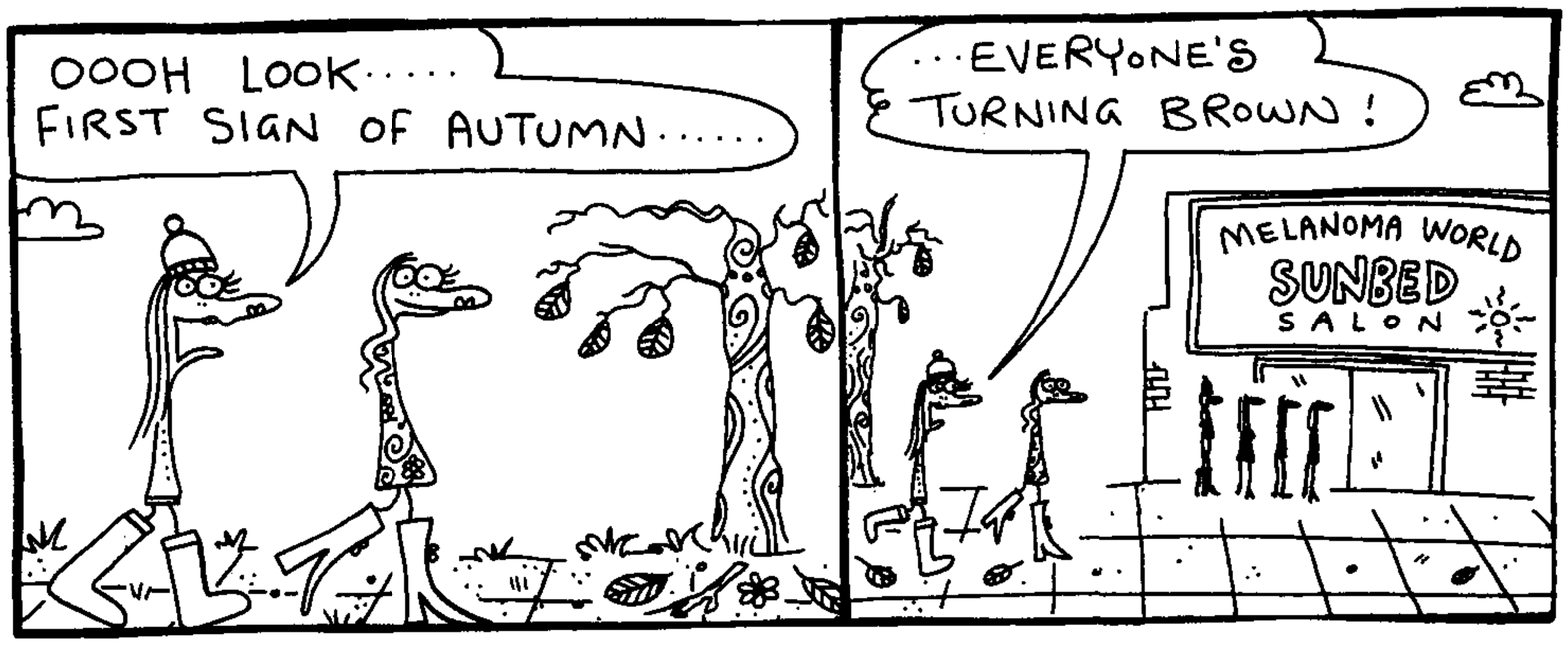
If Boris did break the rules, he isn't the only one. Forgan accepted that Wadley's qualifications were adequate by the very fact of interviewing her: the "invitation to apply" that was sent to candidates stated that those who do not qualify wouldn't be interviewed. The leaking of Forgan's letter to the DCMS is also a breach of the rules.

And if Wadley was a beneficiary of political cronyism, she isn't the only one. What were Forgan's qualifications for chairing the Arts Council? She'd been a media executive (at the *Grauniad* and Channel 4), just like Veronica Wadley, but her politics happened to be in harmony with New Labour. And what about the outgoing chair of the London Arts Council, who was appointed in 2000? She was Sue Woodman, a former current affairs producer at Granada TV – who had no very notable track record in the arts but a very notable husband in the form of Lord Hollick, one of Labour's big benefactors.

Forgan may have persuaded Bradshaw to veto Wadley, but it's a pyrrhic victory. Boris will leave the post open until the Tories win the election and then appoint Wadley anyway. The shadow culture ministers, Jeremy Hunt and Ed Vaizey, were so appalled by last week's shenanigans that they've now let it be known that the sacking of Dame Liz from the Arts Council will be at the top of their "to do" list when they take charge of the DCMS.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER



SIGNAL FAILURES

Bonus balls

THE Conservatives, who said last week they if they were in government they would clamp down on the salaries of top public servants, seem a little confused when it comes to the huge payments made to rail executives.

When National Express Group abandons its east-coast franchise, former First Capital Connect boss Elaine Holt will head the government's safety-net operation until a new franchise is let. Shadow transport minister Robert Goodwill told the *Yorkshire Post* it was "clearly wrong" that her salary could be as high as £180,000.

He's right, of course: all Holt will do is operate some of the east-coast mainline's trains, while the strategic decisions are left to the government and Network Rail manages the infrastructure and signallers. But what bothers the Tories is that Holt's pay will come directly from taxpayers. When taxpayer largesse comes to the rail industry indirectly, the Tories don't seem bothered at all.

For example, they haven't condemned the 24 percent rise in bonus this year for GoAhead boss Keith Ludeman (*Eye* 1245), although most of GoAhead's turnover comes from subsidised rail franchises. They've said little about Richard Branson's windfalls (£24m in 2007) from Virgin Trains, bailed out by taxpayers since the failure of the Virgin-Railtrack west-coast mainline plan; nor about Stagecoach siblings Brian Souter and Ann Gloag amassing £473m from privatised trains and buses.

The Tories promise rail reform to "ensure there is no reward for failure", but only at Network Rail (which is essentially nationalised). They slag off NR's ridiculous bonuses every year, but they weren't so vocal when Metronet boss Andrew Lezala got a £500,000 payoff after his consortium collapsed. Nor were they outraged when FirstGroup chief Moir Lockhead got £1m (including £407,000 bonus) and a knighthood in 2008, the year First Great Western was put on "remedial" measures after lying about its performance and illegally raising fares (*Eye* 1205). And the Tories didn't seem to mind Richard Bowker's £1.1m remuneration at NEG in 2007, when he orchestrated reckless offers for the east-coast franchise and a Spanish coach firm (*Eye* 1240).

AT Labour's conference, meanwhile, chancellor Alistair Darling promised an end to "the reckless culture that puts short-term profits over long-term success". Was he referring to the long overdue end of rail franchising perhaps? Er, no. He meant bankers.

The Tories and Lib Dems reckon franchising would be fine if only franchises were longer (15 or 30 years), matching the industry's investment timescales. But franchise lengths are pretty irrelevant when franchises are driven by current-year profits, dividends and bonuses. If executives saw existing franchises as seven- or 10-year programmes, they would accept short-term losses (or reduced profits) in the context of their whopping profits during the economic boom and the profits to come after the recession. Instead we see fares and station-parking charges rocketing while staffing and catering are eroded, jeopardising future business just to shore up this year's financial results.

LABOUR's attempt to privatise Britain's most punctual trains (*Eye* 1218) has backfired. The government promised £300m for the Tyne & Wear Metro's overdue upgrading, but only if train operation was offered up to the private sector.

All the private bidders have failed to make the grade. The final contenders are the existing operator and Deutsche Bahn, the German government's aggrandising rail firm. In the last two years DB has bought Britain's biggest rail-freight firm, two passenger-train operators (Chiltern and Wrexham & Shropshire) and half of London Overground. So the "publicly owned, publicly accountable" railway Tony Blair promised in 1995 is emerging. Blair just didn't say it was the German public that would own it.

'Dr B Ching'

MEDICINE BALLS

Pass the buck

WOULD the NHS be much different under the Tories? Shadow health secretary Andrew Lansley believes that £1.5bn can be saved by bureaucratic cuts in primary care trusts, strategic health authorities, quangos and the Department of Health.

There will be zero tolerance of waste, inflation and poor value; and "targets" will be replaced by "outcomes" – "One-year and five-year cancer survival rates at least as good as any in Europe; not just a two-week referral to a cancer specialist. In A&E, reduced mortality after emergency admissions to hospital; not just an arbitrary four-hour target. No hospital infections; not just cutting them by a third."

Focusing on outcomes rather than process is a good thing; but as health analyst Andy Cowper pointed out: "Results don't happen unless they are measured, monitored, benchmarked, checked and compared." And this requires some of the bureaucracy you've just slashed. One lesson from Labour is that without scrutiny, people game and cheat to hit targets (sorry, outcomes) because they're "incentivised" to do so and may lose their jobs if they don't. The trick is to make the scrutiny as constructive as possible.

Lansley has a touching faith in GPs to take control of the NHS. Practice Based Commissioning (PBC) will become compulsory and will have real budgets (rather than the imaginary ones that PCTs currently control.) This harks back to the days of GP fundholding, which Labour ditched on principle 12 years ago, thus losing the expertise, enthusiasm and data of entrepreneurial GP practices that it is now desperately trying to recapture.

Fundholding was not without its problems. It was optional, and patients of fundholders tended to get preferential treatment. The contracting process was cumbersome and expensive. And there were some dubious examples of GPs being both purchaser and provider, buying services from their own practice with minimal scrutiny and trousering the profits.

By making PBC compulsory, the Tories hope to iron out postcode variations (although your treatment may still depend less on how sick you are and more on how good your GP is at commissioning). Payment By Results, which codes and prices NHS care, will be kept and extended, to make commissioning easier and more transparent, although it's also very bureaucratic and doesn't fairly reward more complex care. And GPs will in theory be responsible for "managing the entire patient journey" – although what the Tories have crucially not yet made clear is how much control GPs would have over what they prescribe.

In English, the buck for rationing healthcare in the recession will stop with GPs. GPs are generally sensible with money, but few will relish being rebranded as rationers as the NHS seeks to make £20bn cuts. And patients' journeys are complex. Say a GP has a patient on a more expensive statin than the PCT would like because it suits that particular patient better. If the Tories choose not to return control over prescriptions to GPs, the PCT can then perform a "generic switch" to a cheaper brand which gives the patient side effects, so he stops taking it. The patient then has a heart attack, goes to hospital and picks up MRSA to boot. And the GP gets billed for the entire cost of the hospital care (and may even be sued by the patient). Giving GPs control of the budget without giving them reasonable control over what they can prescribe and who they can refer to could lead to an almighty, litigious mess.

M.D

The Agri Brigade

IT LOOKS like winters are about to get leaner for Thelwell ponies. Thanks to a recent announcement by farm minister Jim Fitzpatrick, from next year some of the little moppets are going to have to do without EU taxpayer-funded financial support.

In yet another attempt to sort out the bizarre system of farm subsidy introduced to England in 2005 by Margaret Beckett, holdings of less than one hectare are now to be excluded from the "dynamic hybrid single farm payment" scheme.

This is the latest development in the long-running "pony paddocks" saga, aka "Paddockgate". To discover how England's horsey community learnt to feed from a trough of money previously reserved for farmers, one has to go back to the last round of reforms to the common agricultural policy (CAP).

Since 2005, a new "decoupled subsidy" has been paid to farmers whether they produce anything or not. This "single farm payment" (SFP) replaced a system of paying farmers for each cow kept, vine picked or hectare of wheat harvested. Unfortunately, Brussels granted considerable autonomy to nation states about how to apply SFPs. So while the likes of Scotland and Wales opted for simple-to-administer payment systems, Beckett chose a "dynamic" model for England. This hideously complex version changes in form in each of its eight years (2005-12) and involves an annual calculation for each farm that combines "historic subsidy receipts" with an "area payment" for the land occupied.

"Scarecrow? – that's the farmer"

What the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) failed to appreciate was that by offering an "area payment" in the first year of the "hybrid" scheme, it was inviting applications from tens of thousands of land owners who had not previously received subsidies. Anticipating "10,000 notifications of additional land or changes to land" in 2005, Defra in fact received more than 100,000. These included 40,000 "new customers" eager to register any patch of land bigger than the 0.3 hectare minimum area permitted (roughly one thirteenth of the size of a polo field), with the administrative cost to Defra of servicing each SFP claim estimated at more than £450.

It is a fitting tribute to Mrs Beckett's disastrous introduction of English single farm payments that, nearly three and a half years after her departure from Defra, farm subsidies remain of as much interest to readers of *Horse and Hound* as they are to subscribers to *Farmers Weekly*.

'New Bio-waste Spreader'

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

HEP CATS

AFTER the last *Eye*'s story about East Riding of Yorkshire council (Eryc) and its cosy relationship with PR outfit Mercury Design and Marketing, Mercury's managing director Simon Taylor wrote to Tory council leader Stephen Parnaby apologising for "any embarrassment the article may have caused you".

Said embarrassment arose from the fact that, at the same time Mercury was carrying out lucrative work for the council, its website was advertising training courses for councillors wishing to improve their communication skills, "delivered by Stephen Parnaby OBE alongside Simon Taylor" at £1,750 for half a day, plus VAT.

"Dear Steve," wrote Taylor, "as we both know, you have never worked for or... had any business connection with the company. Nor have you agreed to take part in any training courses. I have to say that the reference to you [on the website] can only be put down to over-enthusiasm on our part... we can now see how this has been misconstrued..."

"Over-enthusiasm"? "Misconstrued"? A more appropriate word, if Parnaby really had no connection to Mercury's training courses, would be "lie".

In the light of Taylor's letter we asked Cllr Parnaby if he felt Mercury, a company with apparently little regard for the truth, was an appropriate outfit with which to entrust a large part of the council's communications work. We also asked how Mercury could have got away with making such a false claim for so long. Was Cllr Parnaby unaware of it? Did no one bring it to his attention until *Eye* 1246 appeared?

Parnaby's reply reiterated the points made in Taylor's letter but failed to address the central question of whether this bunch of pork pie merchants was a suitable recipient of large sums of taxpayers' money. To protect his back, Parnaby has now asked the district auditor to look into how the Mercury contract was awarded.

Parnaby and Taylor both sit on a quango called the Humber Economic Partnership (HEP), the primary aim of which is to "bring together the local authorities and other public and private sector organisations so as to assist, promote and encourage the sustainable economic growth and competitiveness of the Hull and Humber Ports City Region".

One example of the way public and private sector organisations have been brought together occurred in March 2008 when Parnaby voted for his mate Taylor to join the board of the HEP. Shortly afterwards, Taylor was signed up to do HEP's PR and web design. Trebles all round!

NOT SO ROTTEN BOROUGH

THE *Eye* regularly carries stories about central and local government's attempts to restrict the public's right to know how their money is spent. So it is refreshing to be able to applaud a council for standing firmly behind the principle of democratic accountability.

Step forward Nottinghamshire county council, which supported local taxpayer and Friends of the Earth campaigner Shlomo Dowen over his right to inspect details of the council's £800m PFI incinerator deal with French waste company Veolia (*Eye* 1242).

In the summer Veolia obtained an injunction against Notts CC's sharing of the company's invoices and PFI contract for an incinerator near Sherwood Forest with Mr Dowen, who had requested access to the files under the Audit Commission Act. This gives local electors a 20-day window to inspect any books, deeds, vouchers, receipts or contracts relating to accounts under annual audit.

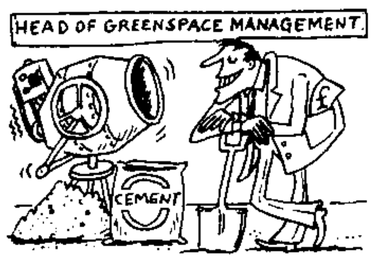
Mr Dowen and the council took the matter to judicial review, with the Audit Commission as an "interested party". On 1 October, at the high court, Mr Justice Cranston ruled that contractors and local authorities cannot use "commercial confidentiality" to prevent taxpayers from viewing contracts between private firms and councils or other public bodies.

"The obligation to pay local taxation through the rates [is] matched by the right given to ratepayers [sic] to an involvement in the process of ensuring the money was well spent," said the judge. "Assisting the audit process include[s] an opportunity for local government electors and other persons interested to inspect and copy the accounts and related documents."

So has Nottinghamshire received gestures of support from other local authorities for its brave stand on behalf of openness and transparency? Not exactly. Lancashire county and Glasgow city councils have both recently claimed that commercial confidentiality override the duty to allow inspection in person. And Liverpool city council shamefully decided to charge 20p for every page of every invoice, contract, bill, receipt or deed requested by any local elector or taxpayer.

"The focus group thought it sounded more caring"

CRYING FOUL



LOVELY Heaton Park has provided peace and tranquillity for the people of north Manchester since it was bought by the city council in 1902.

However, if planning permission is granted next month, a large part of it will disappear under 12 synthetically surfaced football pitches, six tennis and netball courts, a skate park and climbing wall, a cage for "extreme football" and a licensed bar. The whole complex, floodlit and surrounded by high wire fences, will bear a strong likeness to a prisoner-of-war camp.

Although it is supposedly part of the green belt, if Manchester city council and Goals Soccer Centres get their way, there will be nothing green left on site unless the players happen to wear green shirts. The complex would be open all day, every day, until 11pm.

Goals, which runs 33 such sites around Britain and plans to roll out six more per year, plays up the health benefits of encouraging an obese nation to get active, and promises that schools can use the facilities (though schools already use the park's existing three football pitches). Meanwhile it targets vulnerable public spaces. Instead of purchasing brownfield – but more costly – sites where its activities would be an unqualified benefit, Goals leases parkland from cash-strapped councils. What was once soft, leafy and quiet becomes hard, urban and noisy. But who needs grass and trees, anyway?

NEATH CONTEMPT

DEFY Neath Port Talbot council at your peril. Pensioner Linda Ware, who led the battle against National Grid's plans for a gas pressure reduction station on a pipeline through her village of Cilfrew (*Eyes passim*), could be paying the price for the rest of her life.

Despite knowing that Mrs Ware, 61, has no money or assets, NPT has chased her relentlessly for costs incurred during her three-year high court battle against its planning decisions. At last a deal has been struck whereby she'll pay NPT £7,000 at the rate of £9.75 a week out of her pension and disability benefit for the next 14 years.

Mrs Ware's lawyers had argued that, under the Aarhus Convention, she should not be liable for costs when fighting a case of environmental importance.

Last year Derek Davies, NPT's director of finance, said: "I have a personal fiduciary duty on behalf of our council tax payers to collect all sums due to the council" (*Eye* 1212). But NPT's doggedness now seems to have a more chilling motive than needing to swell its coffers by a tenner a week: namely deterring other campaigners who might be tempted to use the courts to challenge council decisions.

This came to light when Judge Master O'Hare asked NPT's barrister Charles Douthwaite why the council was pursuing someone without means. Douthwaite replied that NPT could not be seen to be a "soft touch" especially on environmental issues – that the case was not about money after all, but "the principle".

Mrs Ware finally threw in the towel after Douthwaite told her legal team that should the judge rule in her favour, NPT would immediately appeal. Mrs Ware, who was originally chased for £41,000, said: "I'm being used as an example."

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON KNIFE & PACKER

NO QUEUES, NO CARBON FOOTPRINT... ONLINE ART GALLERIES MEAN THAT THE LIKES OF THE LOUVRE, EL PRADO, THE MET, AND ALL THE WORLD'S FINEST ART WORKS, ARE NOW IN EVERYONE'S LIVING ROOM...
I JUST CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL SOMETHING IS MISSING...
AND I KNOW WHAT IT IS, JEZ: THE GIFT SHOP! WHERE ELSE CAN YOU PURCHASE LUGUBRIOUS POSTCARDS YOU'LL NEVER SEND AND HEFTY ART BOOKS YOU'LL NEVER READ?
I'LL GET THE PASSPORTS, QUIN: GUGGENHEIM HERE WE COME!

NOOKS and CORNERS

"SOUTHAMPTON is the home of the Titanic, so it is only fitting that we tell our story," says James Hannides, the councillor responsible for culture and heritage in the city, exaggerating grossly.

True, some of the crew of the Titanic may have been local, but the ship was built in Belfast and only stopped briefly at Southampton on its maiden voyage from Cherbourg before steaming off to its historic rendezvous with an iceberg.

No matter: the city council now wants to cash in on the Titanic industry with a new museum focused on the fate of the doomed passenger liner. It is proposing to convert and enlarge the former magistrates court in the Civic Centre as a "Sea City" museum or heritage centre. Despite the economic climate, it hopes to have it finished by 2012, the centenary of the sinking of the White Star liner.

How it may look: the south side...

Although the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has given £500,000 to develop the £28m project, it has already run into trouble. Notoriously, the council proposes to flog some of the art works from its rather good Art Gallery to help pay for the project and hopes Alfred Munnings' *After the Race* and Rodin's *Eve* will raise £5m.

Alec Samuels, the jauntily philistine leader of the council, puts it well: "If we don't sell some paintings, we don't get a heritage centre. We've made our choice."

It is an irresponsible choice which, if pursued, will deter any potential donor from helping the Art Gallery and irretrievably damage its collection. The widespread condemnation – Tate Britain and the Museum Association are opposed, while the Heritage Lottery Fund may well change its mind about helping the project – has been widely publicised. But what has not received publicity yet is what is proposed for the fine building chosen to house the museum.

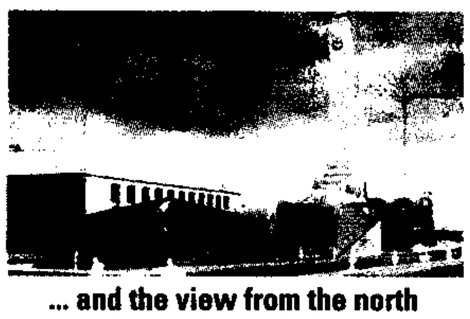
The magistrates courts are an integral part of the Civic Centre, one of the major examples of civic architecture in Britain built between the world wars and now listed grade II*. Designed by E. Berry Webber in 1930 in a monumental, abstracted Classical manner and completed in 1939, the Civic Centre consists of four outward-facing blocks, each symmetrically treated: the municipal offices, the Guildhall, the art gallery & library and the law courts. The complex is surmounted by a landmark clock tower which rises from the court building (containing a carillon which is meant to play *O God Our Help in Ages Past* every four hours).

Now the elevation of the law courts wing is dominated by a giant central entrance arch reached by a monumental staircase flanked by pedestals supporting bronze lamps. Using the nefarious excuse of disabled access, the architects chosen by the council, Wilkinson Eyre, propose to cut away these steps to allow a level approach to the basement floor. The principal floor will then be reached only by lifts. Webber's arched opening will then be extended downwards, and the existing intervening pattern of fenestration surrounding the doors and door frame will all be removed and be replaced by that ubiquitous cliché which is the modern architect's only solution to a problem: sheets of plate glass.

There is more. On the north side it is proposed to add an extension with a series of triangular faceted glazed pavilions (a naïve evocation of icebergs?), upsetting the symmetry of Webber's formal design. And to make it quite clear that the architects have no understanding of, or time for, old-fashioned Classical architecture, they suggest further undermining the symmetry by plonking a glass box on the roof of the southern half of the original building – a discordant feature clearly inspired by the rooftop asymmetrical glass block with which those posturing Swiss pseuds, Herzog & De Meuron, spoilt Bankside Power Station when it was made into Tate Modern.

What is proposed for Southampton Civic Centre is architectural vandalism of a high order. Yet incredibly (but these days not so surprisingly) English Heritage approves of this crass and destructive scheme. Not that Wilkinson Eyre sees it that way: "Even though there are difficulties in terms of the existing building, it is a very exciting prospect. If we can help it, it is going to be the best project we have ever done," it says.

The truth is that the architectural profession is now so divided in approach that there are fashionable award-winning firms that should not be let near an historic or traditional building (eg Milord Rogers's at the British Museum). Wilkinson Eyre are good at steel and glass, engineering solutions, bridges and that sort of thing, but they have no understanding of – or perhaps respect for or interest in – masonry structures governed by a formal civilised architectural language. (They, after all, were the architects who proposed to convert the former Newark Works in Bath into a technical school for James Dyson by eliminating most of the original structure and chopping great chunks out of Thomas Fuller's monumental plinth (*Eyes passim*).



... and the view from the north

With any luck, the economic climate combined with the obloquy heaped on Southampton council for its irresponsible decision to sell paintings will sink this gratuitous project. Why celebrate a disastrous ship by spoiling a good building?

'Piloti'

I-SPY *Bethlehem*

Submitted by Ron Taylor. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs)*

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

IT'S no secret that behind the smiling eyes and merry banter, Ireland is a country in persistent chaos. But the degree of chaos never ceases to amaze.

The latest example concerns its three opera companies – two in Dublin, one in Wexford – which were told only a few months ago by the Irish Arts Council that because of economic meltdown they would have to merge. A shotgun wedding if there ever was one.

After much wailing, screaming and kicking – not least because the merger meant everyone moving south to Wexford, with a humiliating lack of operatic residency in the capital – the warring parties were finally beginning to sit down together to work out the practicalities when the Irish arts minister, Martin Cullen, stuck his oar in. He announced that, er, he enjoys a bit of the old opera; and, well, maybe the Arts Council had got it wrong. Might it not be better if the Dublin companies stayed in Dublin and the Wexford one stayed in Wexford and the whole sorry business was put to one side?

As a result Ireland's opera companies are now in a state of even greater confusion, not knowing whether to pack their bags, pool their resources or stand their ground. Ironic that the 2009 Wexford Festival opens this week with *La Cambiale di Matrimonio*, a rare Rossini farce about a lousy marriage plan that falls apart.

IN LONDON, meanwhile, the critics have been much exercised by the booing at the new Covent Garden production of *Tristan* – as though the poor dears had never encountered such rudery before.

Don't they know that opera is a rough-and-tumble business that's always drawn a robust response from its audience, and that the only difference down the centuries has been the way the boos have been directed at the diva, the composer or the stage director?

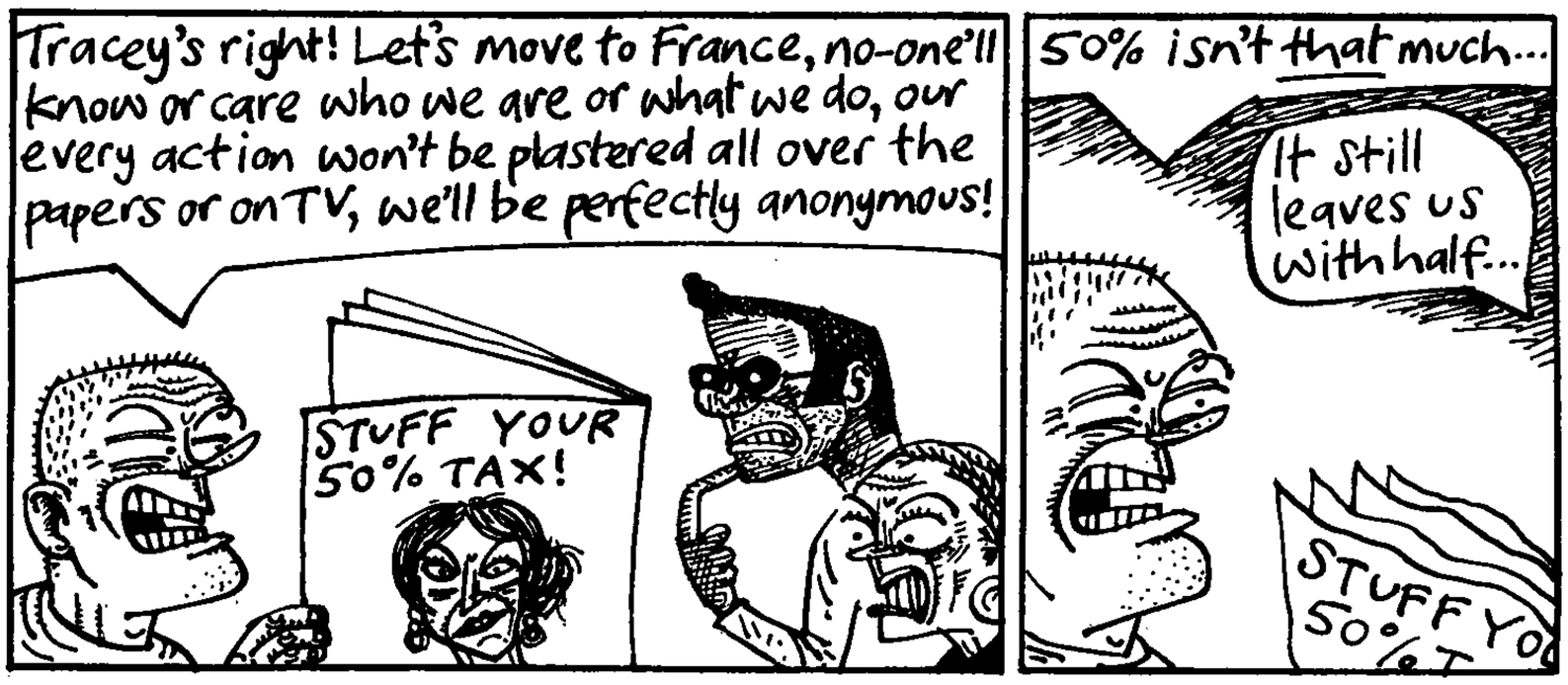
At the Garden, the audience were booing neither Wagner nor a voice but a production team whose stripped bare staging gave them nothing to look at. And however refined their musico-dramatic sensibilities, for £200 a stalls seat in a recession, most people want something to look at.

In fact recessionary audiences are always more demanding. Over at the New York Met right now they're busy booing a new *Tosca* – not because there's nothing to see but because the diva doesn't do her own leap of death; a stunt-lady steps in, rather obviously, and does it for her. In recessions, people want blood.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH


Tracey's right! Let's move to France, no-one'll know or care who we are or what we do, our every action won't be plastered all over the papers or on TV, we'll be perfectly anonymous!
STUFF YOUR 50% TAX!
50% isn't that much...
It still leaves us with half...
STUFF YO
50% T

O·B·N

"... Barack Obama, for example, is so clever, so inclusive. Whenever a problem comes up these days, I find myself saying, 'How would Barack address this?'"

LULU
***Times* Magazine**

Submitted by Lucy Carver.

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

Letters

Covering the BNP

Sir,

Well obviously Robert Everett hit the nail on the head by criticising your esteemed organ for having a cover that suggested the BNP may have some similarities with the German Nazi Party of the 1930s. What future outrageous claims will you make? That the Pope is Catholic – or that bears might defecate in the woods?!

But seriously, he could have perhaps paid a little more attention in history if he believes that it's outrageous to associate the two together and also asserts that the BNP is a "democratic political party". When Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in 1933, the Nazis were the biggest democratically elected party in the Reichstag. However, this didn't stop them dismantling all democratic structures in Germany within 18 months to create a totalitarian dictatorship. Anyone who thinks that the BNP wouldn't do the same is ignoring dire warnings from history at their peril.

CHRIS COCKING,

Via email.

Sir,

I believe I've spotted a printing error in your organ (Letters, 1246) – another brilliant parody of internet ranting normally seen in From The Messageboards seems to have been printed by mistake as a letter from Robert Everett ("BNP'd off").

In the unlikely event that this was not an error and actually a genuine letter, Mr Everett might want to consider not diluting his argument that the BNP shouldn't be associated with Nazis by then throwing such random hyperbole as accusing the BBC of being almost entirely Marxist.

Of course, he might also want to consider the idea that if the BNP doesn't want to be associated with Nazis, then perhaps they should stop associating with Nazis, as has been very well documented in the distant, middle and recent past.

Yours,
D. SHIRES,

London.

Sir,

Re BNP and Question Time (Cover, Eye 1245). I am somewhat puzzled by the furore surrounding the invitation – or non-invitation – of a BNP member, in this case Nick Griffin MEP, to appear on BBC's Question Time.

In 2005 the BNP were asked to send two members to the recording of Question Time to be part of the audience with the implication that they would be heard and allowed to ask questions.

The party duly sent Mr David Joines (sic) the North West regional organiser together with the NW Regional Secretary, myself.

Mr Joines was chosen to ask the first question, on Iraq, which he did so having identified himself as being from the BNP. I subsequently made a contribution from the audience,

Certainly not the same as being on the panel, but the "No Platform for the BNP" policy has been a dead-duck for many years now.

Yours,
ANTHONY DAVID JONES MA,

Ashton under Lyne, Lancs.

Sir,

Re Robert Everett's letter ("BNP'd off", issue 1245), I also wish to complain about your scurrilous and defamatory comparison of the British National Party with the Third Reich.

Yours,
A. HITLER (Reichsfuhrer, Ret'd),

Bridport, Dorset.

Gale warning

Sir,

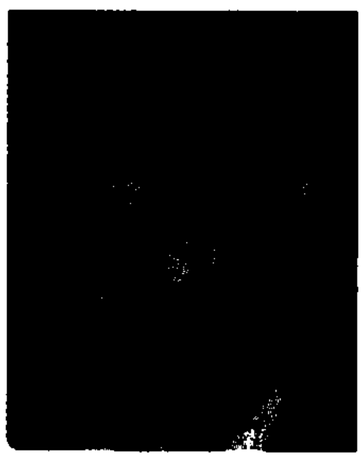
Re "All at sea", Eye 1246, I fear it may already be too late to replace the Royal Navy's "ageing Sea Harriers" in that the last Sea Harrier was retired from service in March 2006, meaning some 12 years without a carrier-based aircraft even in the increasingly unlikely event the JSF should be delivered on time.

As such the Royal Navy has already been "deprived of a major force protection role", now being reliant on a fleet of helicopters and use of the RAF Harrier GR9 which unlike the Sea Harriers, which are mostly undergoing a new lease of life in the Indian Navy, is not a fighter aircraft but a ground attack aircraft with limited use in a maritime environment.

MARCUS GALE,

Via email.

Lookalike



Spock

Schwartz

Sir,

Despite having offered clear evidence that the United States is being taken over by aliens, my numerous telephone calls to the US Embassy in London have been rejected and I am being treated like a crank. For example, it is clear that the eminent General Norton A. Scwartz, Chief of Staff of the US Air Force, has been abducted and replaced by a lookalike...

Yours,
DES PERATUS,

Via email.

Oval balls

Sir,

In your article "Oval Test" (Rotten Boroughs, Eye 1245) your state that Archbishop Tenison's school intends to use the Triangle site, currently being used by a community playgroup, as a car park. This is not correct.

Archbishop Tenison's has the most cramped play space of any secondary school in London. The use of the Triangle would be to ensure the school has playground area for its pupils. The school has never proposed or discussed the use of that land as a car park and such an idea would be firmly opposed by governors.

We believe that the school should be available for as many uses as possible out of school hours. I am surprised that your article does not mention that the Triangle playground group uses not only its ground but the school playground and football area with the blessing of the school.

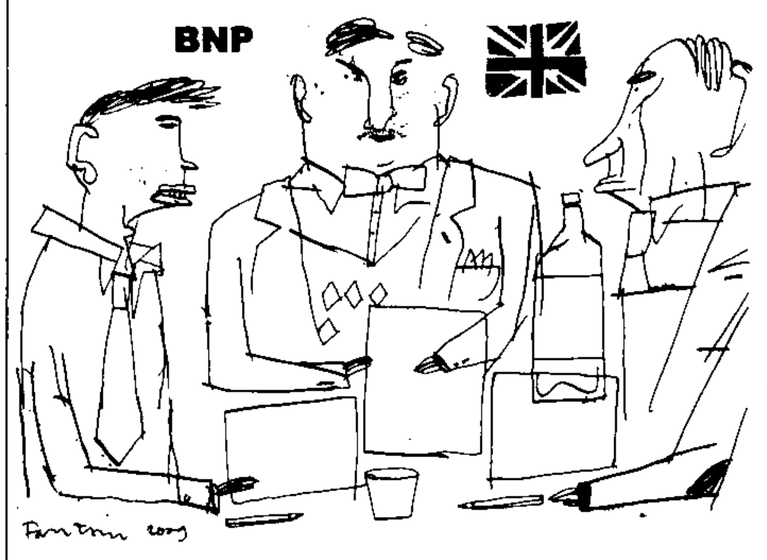
In contrast the Triangle is not used for much of the time especially during school hours. Your quote from me that the community playground is "a disgraceful waste of space" does not relate to the activities of the play group but to the lack of availability of the space during the school day.

Consequently I make no apology for that statement. I would hope Private Eye would agree that is a disgrace that 600 schoolboys should have inadequate school play space particularly when so many of them live in Southwark and Lambeth estates with little or no play space.

Yours faithfully,
ROBERT MORELAND,

Chair of governors, Archbishop Tenison's School.

Scenes You Seldom See



"It's right, when you think about it – we're all the same under the skin"

Publisher be damned

Sir,

Your very good piece on the litigious Sheikh Khalid Bin Mafouz, who managed to quell any criticism by relying on the magnificent English libel laws ("Pulp Friction", Literary Review, 1245), failed to mention the courageous Martin Rynja, who stepped in to publish Craig Unger's "House of Bush, House of Saud" when Random House withdrew. Other editions have led to his offices in Gibson Square being letter-bombed. Martin also publishes a couple of my wife's books, but then nobody's perfect.

Yours,
RUPERT WRIGHT,

Via email.

Browned off

Sir,

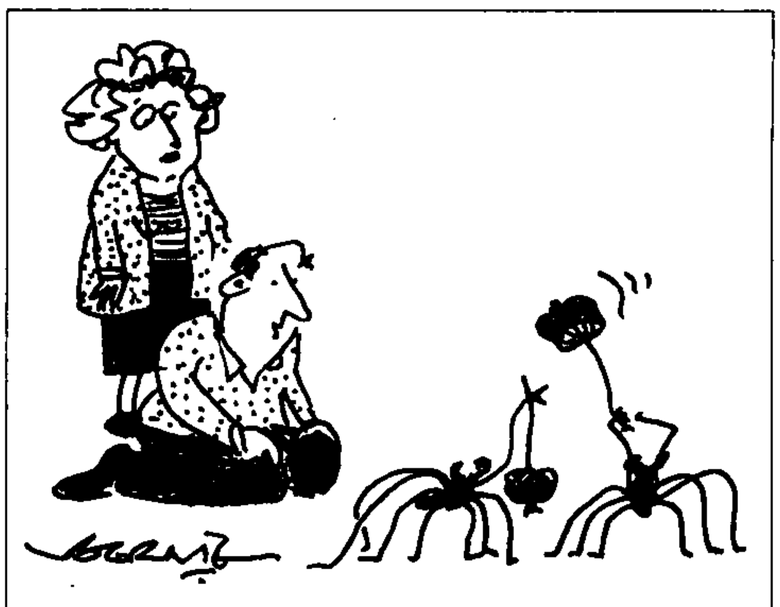
Re the anonymous review of Dan Brown's latest oeuvre (Books and Bookmen, Eye 1246). While the reviewer states that Brown flatters the reader with the "density of his research", this is the real problem.

The Da Vinci Code contained such populist howlers as 5 million women being killed during the European witch-hunts (the total for both sexes is probably no more than 100,000 over two centuries) or that the Pentagram is a symbol of Venus and the "divine feminine" (that would be the Heptagram, Dan, the Pentagram is a symbol of Mars, both being derived from the shapes they appear to make as they move around the Sun when observed from Earth).

Populist fiction is one thing, and I love it, but populist "facts" that get repeated by multi-million-selling authors don't flatter the readers, they insult them.

STEVE WILSON,

London, E6.



"Remember you put some conkers down because you heard spiders don't like them...?"

Notes of discord

Sir,

*The Aeolian cadence R. Lewin cites ("Beatles Maniacs", Letters 1246) as a validation of the brilliance of the Beatles' songwriting is nothing more than a very, **very** ordinary way to end anything in a natural minor key.*

Aeolian mode is just natural minor. Now, if they'd arrived there by using the third in the first part of the cadence as a pivot point from a Lydian passage with its root at the sixth degree in the Aeolian root of the cadence, or a Locrian version similarly displaced, it might have been more interesting.

But they didn't. They wrote tuneful ditties and that's all. Just like Mozart. They are anyways both the musical equivalent of the froth on a cappuccino. Personally I prefer the chewy dregs at the bottom of the musical cup like the Stones, or Stravinsky.

MARTIN DALY,

Via email.

Sir,

If Hugh Schollick (Letters, Eye 1245) really thinks it is "pretentious nonsense" to compare the Beatles to Schubert and Mozart, then he is clearly living on a different planet: presumably one with a nuclear blast-proof bunker to stop popular culture getting in and spoiling things. The Beatles pretty much invented the idea of popular music as art, they revolutionised recording, turned the idea of the LP on its head, and did all of this in front of a staggeringly huge global audience. They changed music profoundly, and permanently, and it's no use putting your hands over your ears and pretending otherwise.

Yours,
MARTIN POLLARD,

Cardiff.

PC Plodding

Sir,

Re "Popeye" (p. 11 Eye 1245). Surely it makes very good sense for the police to find out what kind of concert is being held in regard of expectations of trouble. How much violence do you usually hear about at jazz functions or choral recitals? None. How much do you hear about at rap or hip hop concerts? Lots. To suggest otherwise is to deliberately ignore common sense for political reasons – the definition of political correctness.

I've actually just renewed my subscription rather than cancelling it.

R. LEWIN,

Via email.

Horse sense

Sir,

Piloti is such a bore (Eye 1246). Having the equestrian event in Greenwich is a wonderful opportunity.

As for Piloti's concerns about Greenwich Park he needs to read his history books. In Tudor times the park was used for equestrian events such as jousting and mock battles. Perhaps Piloti would prefer the Stuart era when James I enclosed the park with a brick wall keeping the public out for a century?

TOM FROST,

London SE10.

Last-Ever Pseudo Names (cont.)

... Can the Pseudo Names feature really be coming to an end?

SHIRLEY KNOTT.

Mmmm... don't think so.

ROD FORYOUR
OWEN BACK.

... I liked them. They added flavour to your organ.

ZOLTAN PEPPER.

... Is it true that your Pseudo Names feature was inspired by a similar one in Private Eye's French counterpart, Le Canard Enchainé?

KELLY DAY.

... The Pseudo Names seem to be dwindling in number, perhaps soon to be just a cherished memory. If only there were some enduring way to remember them.

SUE VERNEER-PLEYTS.

... It looks very much like Pseudo Names is going to become a distant memory.

JUAN ZAPONA THYME.

... Oh what bliss it would be to join the ranks of the immortal who have had published their contributions to this column.

ELLIS IAN FIELDS.

(That's enough Pseudo Names. Ed.)

... What a joy to see Vera Lynn topping the charts again – gives us all hope.

WILMA E. TAGEN
DONNA WARE
DON OWEN.

(I said that's enough. Ed.)

... I wish to take out an injunction ASAP and on the QT. Any advice gladly acted upon.

ANN DRUMAR.

"I had to change the password from 'Open Sesame' and now I can't remember it..."

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"We had them by the scruff of the throat at 2-2."

MICK McCARTHY, BBC Sport
(Keith Arnold)

"Everyone in Israel is literally glued to their radio and television sets."

Radio Scotland News
(Ronald Howie)

"Chelsea have five or six injured players out at the moment and if Ashley Cole is injured that makes it seven or eight..."

GLENN HODDLE, SkySports
(Chris Mumford)

"Another mumbo-jumbo of a goalmouth there."

DAVID PLEAT, Radio 5 Live
(Jason Heath)

"It's hard to put my thoughts in their shoes."

ALEX GRAY (Childline), Radio 1
(Simon French)

Pedantry Corner

... Revd Canon G. Ravalde (Eye 1245) makes some interesting points re the Ark of the Covenant. I believe, however, he is wrong about its contents. Whilst Moses certainly put Aaron's rod and a pot of manna into the ark, along with the tablets of the law, by the time of Solomon "there was nothing in the ark except the two stone tablets that Moses had placed in it at Horeb" (1 Kings 8:9a). I can find no clue to the fate of the missing objects. Ideas anyone?

NEIL COODE.

... The Rev'd Canon Geoffrey Ravdale is incorrect in asserting that the Ark of the Covenant was lost by the Romans (Pedantry Corner, 1245). In fact, the Ark went missing (presumed destroyed) centuries earlier when the Babylonians destroyed the Temple in 587 B.C. During the Roman era, the Holy of Holies was empty, which led Pompey, when he forced his way into the Temple and saw the empty Tabernacle to exclaim: "There is no God!"

DANIEL LANDSBERGER.

Bottom of the league

Sir,

Re Shipping out (Letters, Eye 1246). When I was teaching excluded secondary pupils, I found more than once that a child had no SATs results at Key Stage 3. They told me that their school had told them not to turn up for the exams. Wouldn't want to bring down the school's league table results.

Yours,
ELLEN ALCOCK,

Via email.

Count on him

Sir,

Regarding Tim Brooks' recommendation of John Allen Paulos' book "Innumeracy" (Axewatch, Street of Shame, Eye 1246), you stated snottily "staff were none too reassured to learn that their managing director needed the book".

Given the general quality of journalism, it's quite obvious that he's not the only one. Journalists frequently show a total lack of mathematical and statistical knowledge. We've all seen bogus stories such as "formula for the perfect bottom" (Telegraph and others) or "Facebook causes cancer" (Daily Mail), which anyone with a decent mathematical grounding would have seen through a mile off. A lack of numeracy means that these arts-and-humanities-educated hacks simply cannot report meaningfully on anything involving statistics, including but not limited to: health, science, government policy, transport and CO2 emissions. I guess that leaves them just tabloid stories.

Good job to Tim Brooks for recommending this book to a group sorely in need of it!

PHILIP POTTER,

Via email.

Letter from **Managua**

from Our Own Correspondent

OFFICIAL functions are colourful affairs in today's Nicaragua. Our Sandinista president Daniel Ortega and his wife Rosario Murillo have made shocking cyclamen pink the official colour of government. According to Murillo, this is the colour of love, the emblem of "reconciliation and national unity".

It is also the colour of the floral centrepieces that decorate the tables at official events. And the love it represents begins touchingly near to home, as such flower arrangements are all supplied by a local firm, owned by one of Rosario Murillo's sons. Another son owns a luxury hotel in the capital and runs the commercial outlets in our spruce new airport. How mean-spirited are those who carp at these entrepreneurial achievements of our new first family.

Once hardcore socialists, the Sandinistas now see all kinds of efficiencies and advantage in a partnership between the public and private sector. Take, for example, Venezuela's help in the oil and petrol sector. President Ortega is one of Hugo Chavez's most enthusiastic supporters, and has signed the country up for his ALBA alliance, an alternative to free trade agreements with the United States. In return the Venezuelan strongman provides Nicaragua with up to $500m worth of cheap oil each year.

This is channelled through Albanisa in Venezuela and Petronic, the Nicaraguan national oil company. The service stations run by Petronic were leased in 1999 to Swiss-based commodity brokers Glencore. At the time, the Sandinistas, then in opposition, protested about the generous terms the government was giving the foreign company, complaining that the profits would be going abroad and do nothing to help out country, the poorest in mainland Latin America.

In 2007 Glencore was bought out, and it was widely thought that Petronic would once more become a state-run outfit. This time, however, it became part of Albanisa, therefore avoiding any controls by the state. The head of Albanisa in Nicaragua is Francisco Lopez, one of President Ortega's closest associates, who also happens to be treasurer of the Sandinista party.

Lopez claims that Albanisa is a perfectly normal commercial company whose financial results are open to scrutiny, and he dismisses criticism in our press as "media terrorism. It means attacking the hopes of the poor, the rights of children, of the malnourished, hungry and thirsty".

Similarly creative tactics are being applied to our fragile democratic process. After widespread allegations of fraud during last November's local elections, the European Union withdrew $75m aid, and the Obama administration suspended $64m in Millennium Challenge money. How typical of you gringos to portray the cut and thrust of party politics here as the fraudulent actions of a president desperate to stay on power by any means possible. If Ortega and his pals are searching for any option to change the constitution so the president can again contest elections in 2011, this is surely no more than any humble servant of the people might do.

President Ortega first came to power in 1979, when he and his Sandinista revolutionaries ousted the Somoza family dynasty. Voted back into power in 2006, Ortega claims he is continuing the Sandinista revolution. His critics – many of them his former Sandinista colleagues – beg to differ, claiming that the similarities between his clan and the Somozas are becoming ever more obvious.

There is increasing speculation here in Managua that, if Daniel Ortega cannot get the national constitution changed in time to allow him to stand for re-election himself, he will put up his wife or one of her entrepreneurial sons as a candidate to continue the "pink" revolution and, er, say it with flowers.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "It is perfectly possible for the Devil to have carnal intercourse with a man's wife," religious leader Datuk Abu Hasan told a Syariah Court in Malaysia, "because the Devil can make himself appear to look just like the husband. In this case, the husband has been regularly asking his wife for sex more than ten times a day, which suggests to me that he must be friendly with evil forces, and practising black magic. It is considered normal for a man to want sex two or three times a day, but when the wife is asked more frequently than that, then it is probably not the husband who is asking, but the Devil."

Hasan was speaking during a hearing in the Syariah Court (a Malaysian court that

operates under Shariah law), in which a wife was seeking a *fasakh* (divorce) due to her husband's unusual sex drive. "It all started when he had sex with her seventeen times on their wedding night," the wife's representative Nazri Md Isa told the court. "The wife did not suspect anything at the time, because she thought he was merely performing his duty as a husband. But when the situation persisted, day after day, she told her mother, who also thought it was strange. When the wife's family came to her house to investigate one morning, they found two men hiding in the bathroom, both of whom looked exactly like the husband. Which struck them as odd, because the family had seen the husband leaving for work earlier that morning." *(The Star [Malaysia], 27/7/09. Spotter: Norman Stephens)*

– ● –

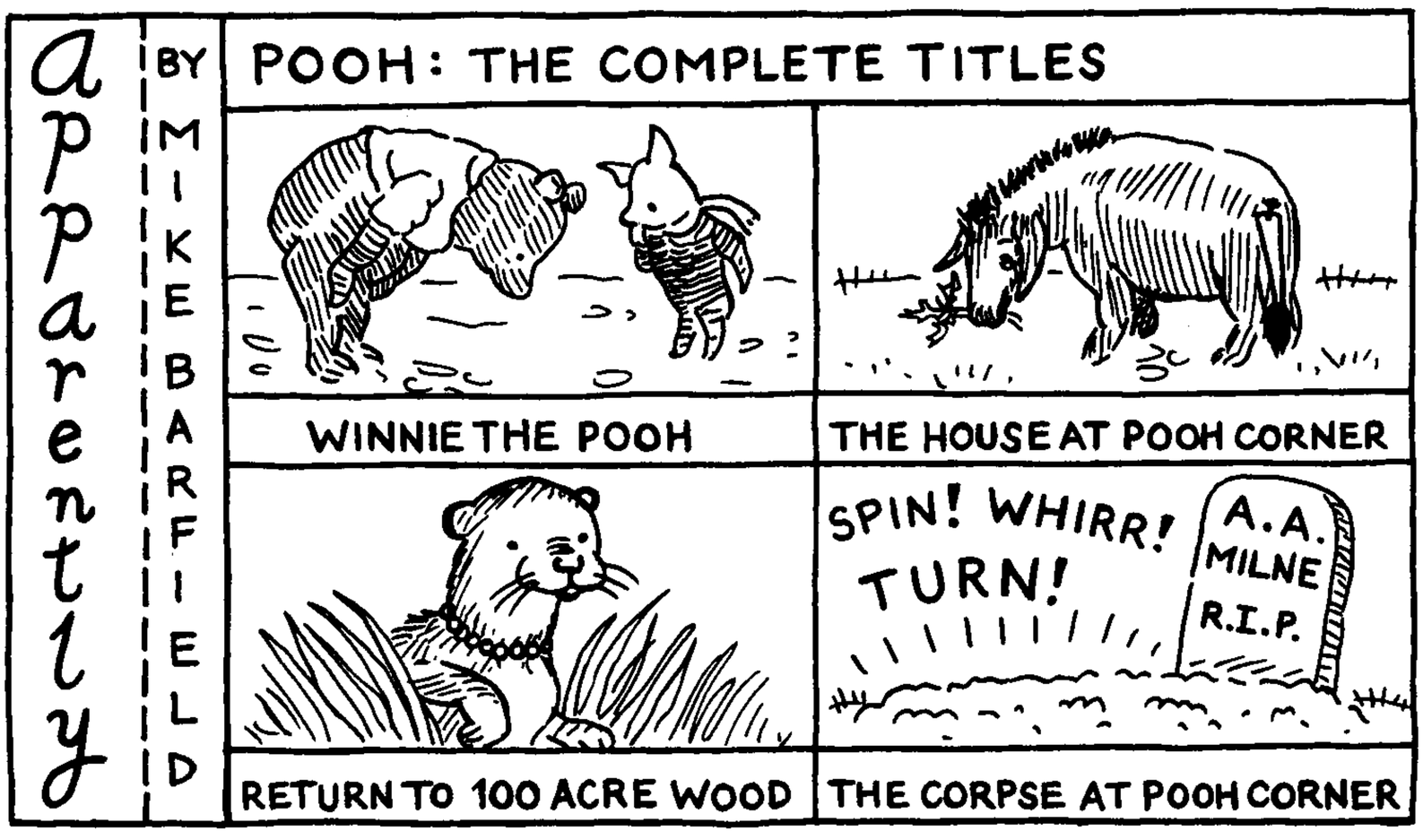
● *"Kenneth Richardson lived in this parish for more than thirty years," solicitor Jenny Brading of Powells Solicitors told members of Banwell parish council in North Somerset, "and his last wish was to be buried here. However, he was born in Goole, in the East Riding of Yorkshire, and his place of birth remained of great importance to him throughout his life. His will states that he wishes to be buried in Banwell cemetery, but it is also most insistent about the epitaph that he wished to have engraved on the tombstone. He wanted these words: 'I would rather be in Goole'."*

Replying on behalf of the council, the clerk (also called Ken Richardson) stated that "the council originally rejected the request, because it was felt that the words 'I would rather be in Goole' would offend some people. However, after further discussion, it was suggested that the phrase would be less offensive if the word 'frankly' preceded it. The council therefore grants Mr Richardson his last request, provided that his tombstone reads 'Frankly, I would rather be in Goole'." (Goole Times, 20/8/09. Spotter: Anon)

– ● –

● "I did not want an ordinary cliché wedding parade or banquet," groom Zhao Peng told reporters in Northeast China's Jilin province, "but I could not afford the extravagance of a lavish hot air balloon wedding. So I discussed the problem with my bride-to-be, Lin Rong, and we agreed to make the occasion memorable by creating the world's longest wedding gown, which would be handmade by my family, and which she would wear on our wedding day. It has taken us three months to do the lacework, to decorate it with 9,999 silk roses, and to stitch 608 crystals onto it in memory of our 608 dating days. And this morning it took our two hundred wedding guests over three hours to unroll it completely. But the effort was well worth it, because it has just been measured at 2,162 metres, which is certain to propel us into the Guinness Book of Records."

The dress was unveiled in Jilin city park on August 1st, and was measured in front of journalists from 13 Chinese newspapers, radio and TV stations. Commenting on the dress, Mr Zhao's mother said, "In my opinion, it is a complete waste of money." *(China Daily, 6/8/09. Spotter: David Dallison)*



PRIME MINISTERIAL DECREE NO. 55

From the Wife of the Supreme Leader, Comrade Sarah Brown

It is my very great privilege to introduce this Prime Ministerial Decree on behalf of the man you call Supreme Leader but I call the most wonderful, loving husband in the whole world – which, as you know, he has single-handedly saved from ruin!

In a word the Supreme Leader is my hero – and I know in your hearts that he is yours. Yes, I know he has his faults. He is sometimes, I admit, too clever, too hard-working, too honest, and too wonderful for this world – which, may I remind you, he has single-handedly saved from ruin!

There are those mean-spirited critics who point to the Supreme Leader (who I worship and adore!) and say, "No-one likes you Gordon".

Well, I have news for those back-stabbers and renegades. One person likes him. And that is me!

So can we all now welcome onto the page the man you have been waiting for, the Supreme Husband, Mr Sarah Brown!

Unfortunately the Supreme Leader is indisposed and is not able to write his fortnightly Prime Ministerial Decree. Comrade Dr Lord Mandelson has therefore issued the following statement instead:

Yet Another Certificate of the Complete Mental and Physical Health of the Supreme Leader

Comrades are no doubt aware of the disgraceful questioning of the Supreme Leader by the treacherous Neo-Blairite lickspittle so-called Comrade Andrew Marr, who had the effrontery to ask the Supreme Leader, "Are you taking anti-depressants? And if not why not?"

This outrage against the Supreme Leader was compounded by the fact that Comrade Marr knew perfectly well that I had issued a categoric denial of these rumours. *(See Directive 54, sub-section 32(vii)e in the State Denial Archive.)* I even went so far as to name the drug Bonkazapam which the Supreme Leader is NOT taking. *(He is also not taking, by the way, Loondazine or Barmodon.)*

How dare Comrade Marr doubt my integrity? How dare he imply that the Supreme Leader has in some way "lost it" and I don't mean the election though no doubt this is what the corporatist Running Dog Marr is hoping for by his insulting anti-Brownist propaganda.

I have again made a careful observation of the Supreme Leader over the past week and these are the irrefutable proofs that he is as sane as I am:

1. He has declared the recent Party Congress as an unprecedented triumph that has seen his personal approval ratings soar through the floor. Only a madman would say otherwise.

2. He has welcomed the decision by News Pravda International to cease supporting him and his party. As the Supreme Leader has said, "Who in their right mind would want support from the squalid pornographer, ideologue and Neo-Capitalist Australio-Americanist Running Digger, Rupert Murdoch who was responsible for the success of the hated Ex-Comrade Blair?"

3. He has sensibly stormed out of a number of TV interviews which attempted to raise these matters thus giving the public the impression that he is calm, rational and still attached to the microphone.

4. He has steadfastly refused to engage in the petty gossip of the media claque who are only interested in the non-story of his handing over the Supreme Leadership to someone more capable, more charismatic, more popular and someone who was given a standing ovation by the party at the recent conference for his famous catchphrase 'I'm a Bouncer-Back not a Bitter-Hack!'

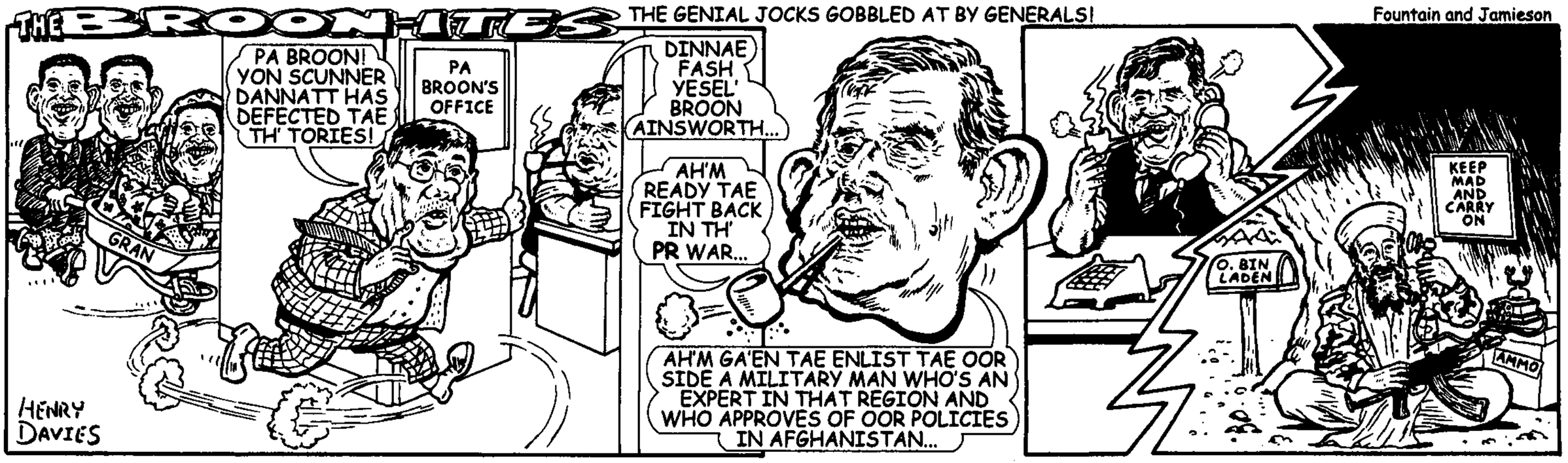
5. He is not hearing any voices, particularly not those urging him to pack it in and hand over to etc. etc. *(see point 4 above).*

6. Even the news that the hated former Leader Ex-Comrade Blair is to become Supreme President of Europe has not disturbed the Supreme Leader's tranquil state of mind. A lesser man would have foamed at the mouth, chewed the carpet and retreated to a darkened room shouting that there was no way he was going to write the Prime Ministerial Decree this week.

I hope this will clear up this madder once and for all.

Signed

Comrade Lord Mandelson


THE BROON-ITES
THE GENIAL JOCKS GOBBLED AT BY GENERALS!
Fountain and Jamieson
PA BROON! YON SCUNNER DANNATT HAS DEFECTED TAE TH' TORIES!
PA BROON'S OFFICE
GRAN
DINNAE FASH YESEL' BROON AINSWORTH...
AH'M READY TAE FIGHT BACK IN TH' PR WAR...
AH'M GA'EN TAE ENLIST TAE OOR SIDE A MILITARY MAN WHO'S AN EXPERT IN THAT REGION AND WHO APPROVES OF OOR POLICIES IN AFGHANISTAN...
O. BIN LADEN
KEEP MAD AND CARRY ON
AMMO
HENRY DAVIES

BRITAIN CLOSING DOWN SALE!
All items previously the property of the taxpayer now on offer due to bankruptcy
1000's of lots at knock down prices including:
CHANNEL TUNNEL – yours for £10!
STUDENT LOANS – take them away, please. We'll let you have them all for 99p!
NELSON'S COLUMN – make us an offer!
BEEFEATERS (set of ten) 2p each!
NORTH CIRCULAR – no offer refused!
YES, EVERYTHING MUST GO – EXCEPT GORDON BROWN

COMIC PARTNERSHIP NEARLY LOST TO HISTORY

by Our Showbiz Staff **Morecambe And Wise**

BRITAIN'S funniest double act were on the brink of giving up their careers before they had even become successful.

Comedians Tone and Gordie were to become inseparable in the heart of the nation and their show ran for an incredible 12 years. The idea now that they could have gone their separate ways is inconceivable. Said one commentator: "It is like fish without chips or chalk without cheese."

But, according to a letter recently unearthed, straight man Gordie wrote very early on to Tone spelling out his doubts about their partnership.

THAT LETTER IN FULL

Dear Tone. It's not working. I'm going to give up. Unless of course you promise that one day *I* can be the person that everyone laughs at. Gordie.

But, luckily for the world of comedy, Tone persuaded Gordie to carry on in his shadow while *he* took the limelight.

The rest is history as the two of them danced into legend singing their trademark song, "Bring Me *Sun* Readers".

● **Full story and pix p. 94**

FROM THE ROYAL BANK OF SCOTLAND ART COLLECTION

L.S. Lowry. People Made Redundant as a Result of the Banking Crisis (2009)

Those controversial Royal Mail cards in full

Customer has to wait one day before trudging to his local sorting office to pick up his package.

Customer then has to wait an eternity not to trudge to his local sorting office not to receive his package.

"Barack... does this mean that the honeymoon is over?"

ME AND MY SPOON

THIS WEEK

BEN BRADSHAW

Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport

Do you have many spoons?

Not as many as people at the BBC. They've got hundreds of spoons, thousands probably, it's a disgrace.

Do you have a favourite spoon?

No, I'm not biased, unlike the BBC who are so pro Tory, it's a disgrace.

So, you're saying you don't have a favourite spoon?

Now you're putting words into my mouth – just like the BBC who are, frankly, a disgrace.

OK, let's put it another way. Do you...?

Just like the BBC again. They always put it "another way", ie the Tory way, twisting and lying about everything I say.

Shall we forget about spoons?

Oh, so we're *not* talking about spoons suddenly. Typical BBC. You're obviously working for them. Oh, yes, it all makes sense now. You were born with a silver spoon in your mouth, like everyone at the BBC... what a disgrace.

I know this is purely hypothetical, but has anything amusing ever happened to you in connection with a spoon?

No. But I expect the BBC will make up some story about me and a spoon. What a disgrace they are.

NEXT WEEK: *Sir Thomas Legg: 'Me And My Leg'.*

POLICE LOG

Neasden Central Police Station

0833 hrs Armed SWAT team of 12 officers called out to incident at Mary Seacole Primary School in Lidl Road in response to emergency call from Lee Asbo, aged 8½.

0852 hrs Officers arrive at crime scene to discover suspect, geography teacher Derek Mapp, 63, explaining action of volcanoes to Year 4.

0903 hrs Under rigorous interrogation involving low-level Taser deployment (94,000 volts) Mapp admits verbal abuse of pupil – i.e. telling Asbo to "stop eating crisps and concentrate".

0917 hrs Mother of victim, Chantelle Asbo and live-in partner, Steve Lager arrive to be briefed about "horrific abuse of their son".

0925 hrs Mapp charged with Aggravated Assault, Attempted Homicide and Crimes Against Humanity.

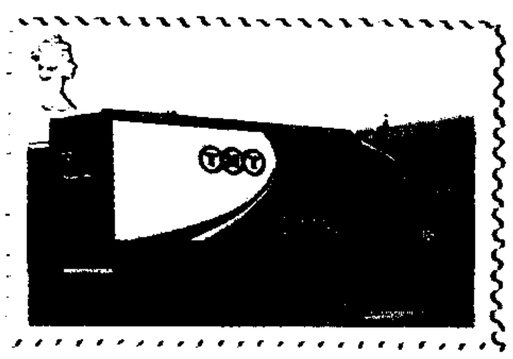
1011 hrs Suspect arrives at Neasden Police Station.

1018 hrs Body of suspect taken to Neasden Mortuary.

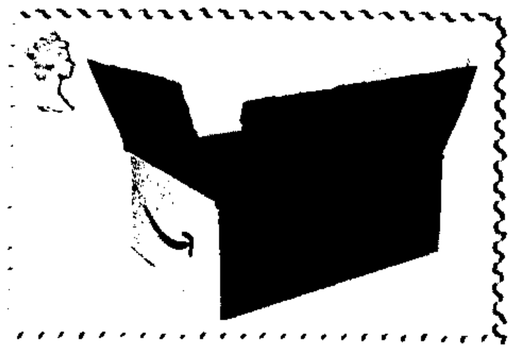
1027 hrs Coroner's report on the late Mr Mapp finds "accidental death by Swine Flu".

New from Royal Mail

A set of commemorative stamps to celebrate great alternatives to using Royal Mail



TNT



HDN

Motorcycle Courier

Local Minicab

Carrier Pigeon

Message in Bottle

Royal Mail

Delivering Business To Our Rivals!

Mr Cameron Rejoices in the Knowledge that the Sun is Shining on him

That Cameron Speech In Full

I WANT to get straight to the point. Yes, things are terrible. Yes, there is a steep climb, but when we get to the top we will be able to throw ourselves off. And may I just have a standing ovation at this point for mentioning the armed forces and their brave leader, General Dannatt, who has risked everything to join the Conservative Party. *(Standing ovation)*

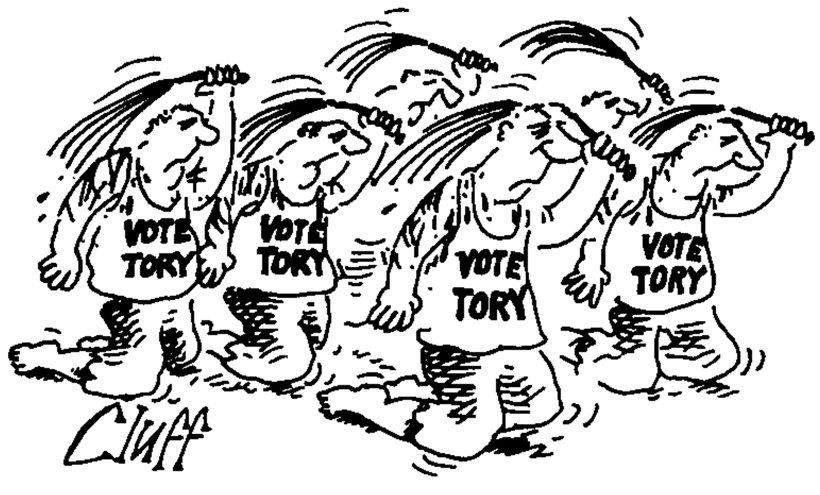
I am a simple person. I believe in Family, Community and Country. And in my wife. May I have another standing ovation for saying how much I love her, even though I did not get her to introduce me like the cynical Gordon Brown. *(Standing ovation)*

We must pay off our debts. My debt in particular is to Tony Blair. So can I just say things that the conference does not usually support, but say them in a rising cadence that means you applaud wildly at the end? The NHS, women candidates, civil partnerships, the NHS, devolution, the environment, fighting poverty, the NHS, higher taxes, financial regulation, the NHS, international aid and the NHS? *(Standing ovation)*

Let me read out some emails. That is what they do on the radio when they can't think of anything to say between songs. And yes, *Reasons To Be Cheerful* is a great song that is coming up next. But first, the weather. *(Standing ovation)*

Everything is the fault of Big Government doing too much. Especially the banking crisis where the government did too little. Er... time to read out some more emails from poor people. *(Standing ovation)*

Finally, I know that all our promises to cut spending and freeze pay are very depressing. But remember our record of breaking promises and you'll suddenly feel a whole lot better. And now *Reason to Believe* by the Arctic Monkeys. *(Final standing ovation lasting 94 minutes)*



'RETIRE AT 58' — TORIES' NEW PLAN

by Our Political Staff **Michael Whitehair**

IN A RADICAL new proposal announced at the Conservative conference last night, Shadow Chancellor George Osborne called for the retirement age for men to be set at 58.

He said, "There comes an age when some men, particularly those in the public sector, need to pack it in, admit they are useless and past it, and make way for a younger man called Dave."

A Government spokesman attacked the proposal, saying, "58 is far too old for a Prime Minister to retire. It should be 57."

LIFE UNDER THE TORIES
How it will look

by Our Entire Political Staff

CRITICS said that the Tories had no ideas but this week the Cameron agenda became crystal clear. In a series of dramatic, highly-researched and comprehensively thought-through statements the Conservatives have now firmly established their vision for the future.

What You Will See

1. Chic heels
2. Smart top
3. Casual jeans
4. Or possibly cropped trousers
5. Dolphin tattoo
6. Vote Conservative

SUN BACKS WINNER

Today the Sun pledges its support for the man who is going to run the country for the next five years. He is young, dynamic, and has got his finger on the nation's pulse. OK, he's rich, privileged and has behaved disgracefully in the past.

But we don't care. Because Rupert Murdoch is the man who pays our wages and tells us what to write. *(Is this OK, Sir?)*

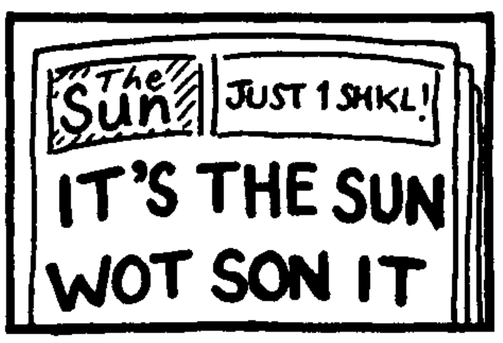
SUN HEADLINES:
THE COMPLETE AUDACIOUS CLAIMS

1992: John Major's Election Victory

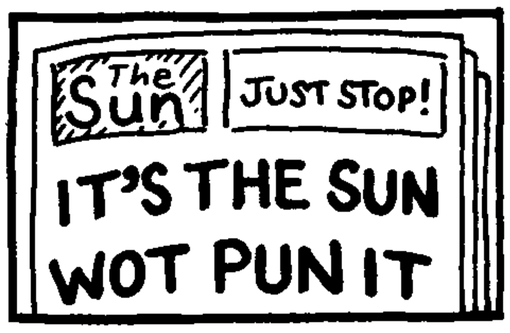
1966: 'Sound of Music' Wins Five Oscars

1954: Roger Bannister Breaks 4 Minute Mile

1918: Allies Victorious in World War One



0: Christ is Born In Bethlehem



1964: Stupid Tabloid Headlines Invented

Dave Snooty AND HIS PALS

AT THE GANG'S ANNUAL BEANO . . .
WE MUSTN'T LET BORIS STEAL THE SHOW!
BORIS!
NOT BORIS!
BORIS! NO SIREE!!
BORIS!!
BORIS!!!
. . . AND I DON'T WANT ANYONE CAUGHT QUAFFING CHAMPERS . . .
ER . . . LIKE THIS!
I'LL DRINK TO THAT!
CHEERS!
BULLY
HE'S A RIGHT CHAMPAGNE SNOOTIE, EH, READERS!?
YOU NEEDN'T WORRY ABOUT ME TAKING OVER IN THE FUTURE, DAVE . . .
PHEW!
BECAUSE I'M GOING TO DO IT NOW!!!
BORIS!

EU-phemisms

UK TORY PARTY
In power we will make the EU more like Cameron's Conservatives
In power we will maintain our robust approach to Europe

A privileged elite who surround themselves with like-minded sycophants...er...

We'll blather and whine, piss away all our influence then let them do whatever they want

EU COMMISSION
If the UK Tories are elected we will answer all Mr Cameron's concerns on the Lisbon Treaty
We are comfortable with the prospect of a UK Tory Government
RGJ

And every answer will be "We've ratified it, your opinion doesn't count anymore, get stuffed"

Once Lisbon's ratified we won't have to listen to the pathetic whines of national Governments anymore

ENGLAND LOSE WORLD CUP

by **E.I. Adios**, Our Man With The Crashing Laptop And The Bottle Of Extra-Strong Pear Cider.

THEY think it's all over! And they're right! England's World Cup dreams lie shattered in the gutter.

And I'm there with them.

The idea that this rag-tag bunch of losers and has-beens could lift the coveted Jules Holland trophy in South America next year is as much a reality as me saying no to another bottle of this delicious Tesco pear cider *(Get on with it. Ed.)*

Shame on them! From what I could see on my laptop there were a lot of naked women doing things to each other for 90 minutes. That's no way to win a World Cup, Fabio! Fielding a team of blurry lesbians with no clothes on was bound to end in disaster. *(You're fired. Ed.)*

An Apology

LAST MONTH our distinguished football correspondent E.I. Adios may have given readers the impression that England had already won the World Cup. Headlines such as 'England Win World Cup!', 'England Win World Cup!' and 'World Cup Won By England!' may have led readers to believe that the national football team were in some way in contention to win the coveted World Cup trophy.

We now realise, following a 1-0 defeat by the Ukraine, that the current England side is the worst group of footballers ever assembled by an England manager in the entire history of the game. This sad truth is conveyed in our more recent headlines – 'Capello Must Die!', 'String Up Rio!' and 'Bring Back Sven!'

We apologise for any confusion caused by this unfortunate misunderstanding, which we promise not to repeat until the next time England win.

The Secrets of the Mary Rose

What they found on the 500 year old Tudor warship

- **Wooden tankard**
- **Nit comb**
- **Sailors' clogs**
- **2 tickets to Mousetrap**
- **Best of Andy Williams song sheet** (including Moon River)
- **Bruce Forsyth's joke book**
- **Ming Campbell election leaflet** (Vote For Ye Liberal Democrats)
- **Invitation to join *Oldie* cruise on the Mary Rose with guest speakers Richard Ingrams, Mavis Nicholson and Beryl Bainbridge** *(That's enough, Ed)*

Police refuse to help thug attack mum

Metro

Late News

GRAYLING'S GAFFE

DAVID Cameron has insisted that his comments on hearing about Chris Grayling's gaffe over the appointment of General Sir Richard Dannatt had been misheard.

"I definitely called Chris Grayling a 'political stunt'," insisted a red-faced David *(cont. p. 94)*

HARD-WORKING FAMILY 'RELIEVED'

A HARD-WORKING family expressed their relief last night after Nick Clegg/Gordon Brown/David Cameron announced that, after the next election, they would be a top priority.

"We were really concerned that the party leaders would announce that they would devote all their efforts to looking after scrounging work-shy criminals," said a hard-working dad, sitting next to his hard-working wife and hard-working children.

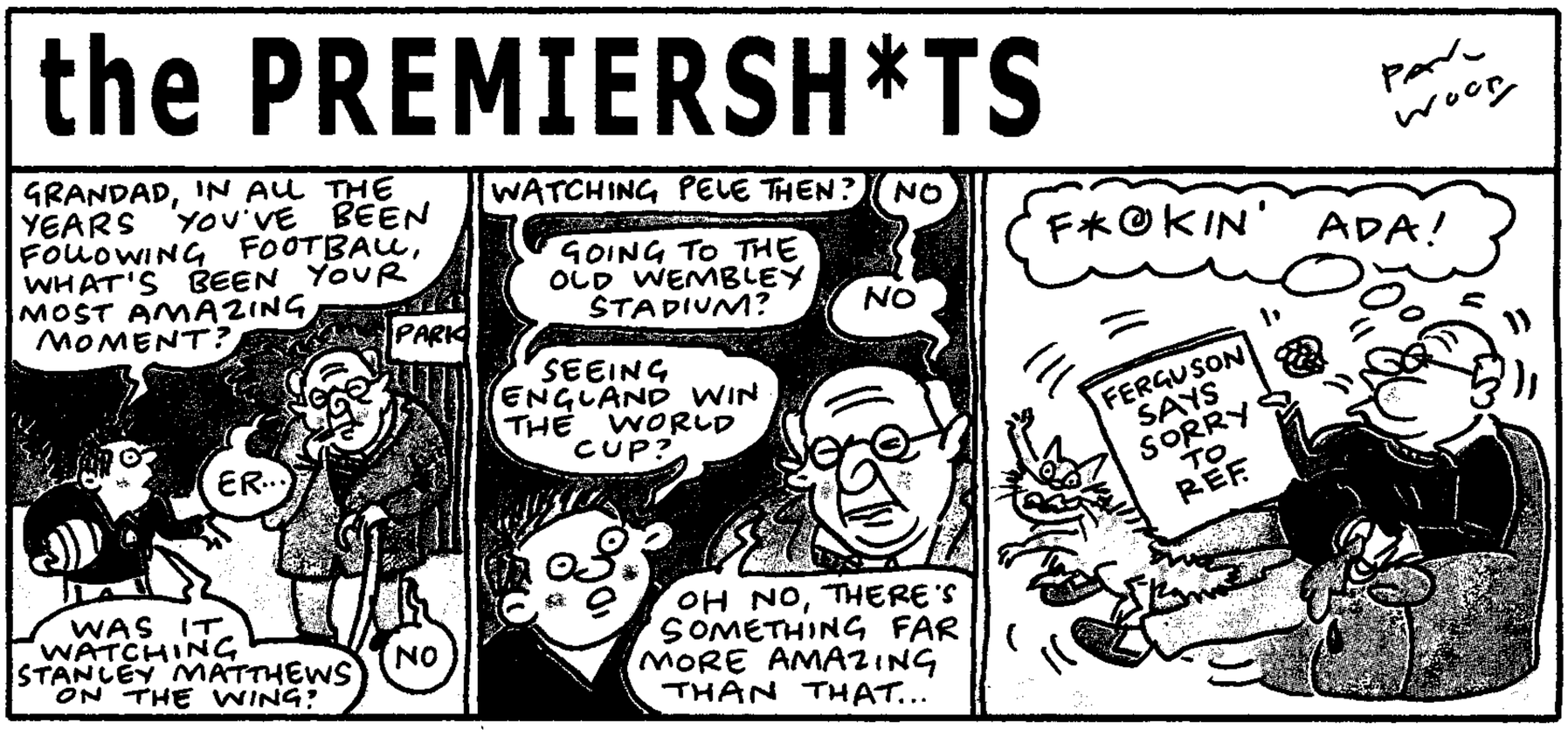
"You can imagine how utterly relieved we are."

BRUCE FORSYTH 'URGES STRICTLY SENSES OF HUMOUR'

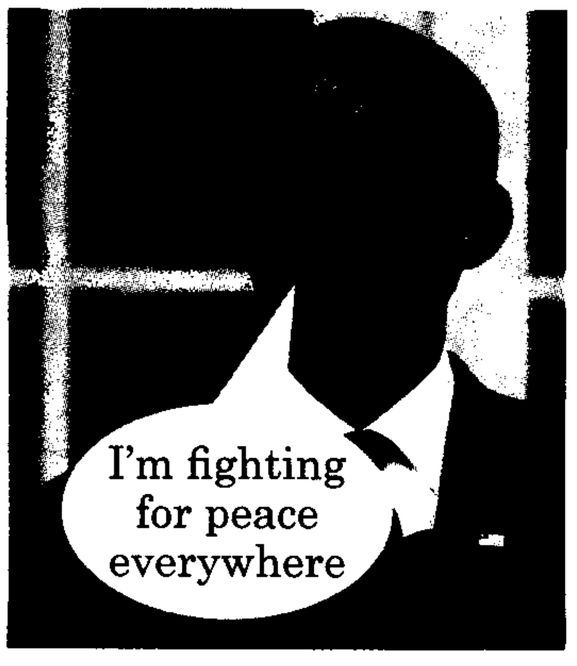
STRICTLY Come Dancing **host Bruce Forsyth has been lam-basted after he urged viewers to have a sense of humour over his jokes on the show.**

"Forty or fifty years ago people would have laughed at these jokes – why can't they now?" asked the *(cont. p. 94)*

the PREMIERSH*TS


Paul Woods
GRANDAD, IN ALL THE YEARS YOU'VE BEEN FOLLOWING FOOTBALL, WHAT'S BEEN YOUR MOST AMAZING MOMENT?
PARK
ER...
WAS IT WATCHING STANLEY MATTHEWS ON THE WING?
NO
WATCHING PELE THEN?
NO
GOING TO THE OLD WEMBLEY STADIUM?
NO
SEEING ENGLAND WIN THE WORLD CUP?
OH NO, THERE'S SOMETHING FAR MORE AMAZING THAN THAT...
F*@KIN' ADA!
FERGUSON SAYS SORRY TO REF

OBAMA'S NOBEL PRIZE SHOCK



"Excuse me, do you work here?"

POETRY CORNER

Lines On The Departure Of Ms Tracey Emin Into Self-Imposed Tax Exile

So. Farewell
Then Tracey
Emin.

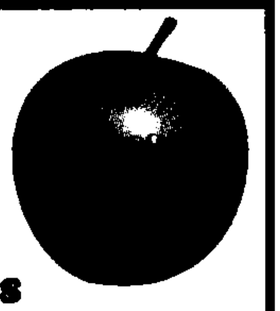
You do not
Want to pay
50% tax
And so are
Leaving
Britain.

Keith says
You didn't
Make your
Bed.

And now
You are not
Going to lie
In it.

E.J. Thribb (17½% p.a.)

Easy Recipes from the Eye



No. 94.
An Apple

Ingredients
One apple
Directions
1. Buy an apple
2. Eat it
Serves one

Tomorrow: A can of coke.
Have you got a favourite recipe? Send it in to Eyeeasy.co.uk

Those 'New Strictly' Dances in Full

Anton Du Berk

★ The Paki-Doble
★ The Sambo
★ The Goose-step
(We get the idea. Ed.)

"Only one child in the town of Hamelin didn't have an iPod"

THE DAILY STAR ★

HEROD SEEKS COMPENSATION OVER BABY J CASE

by Beth Lee Hemm

The controversial figure at the centre of the Baby J case is suing over what he calls his "unfair treatment".

King Herod was widely condemned at the time for his failure to prevent all the firstborn in the land being slaughtered. But Herod's lawyer, Keith Shekel, last night claimed that Herod has been victimised as a result of a "public outcry whipped up by the Bible."

Unstable

"My client did nothing wrong. He followed all the standard procedures which are laid down for authorities to implement in the event of the birth of a Messiah. All the boxes were ticked, but regrettably all the babies were murdered."

Mr Shekel continued, "In fact, Herod deserves a pay rise on account of the fact that Baby J survived the so-called Massacre of the Innocents and his upbringing has been successful after his placement with his stepfather and single mother.

Bad Tidings

Herod is demanding substantial compensation of "Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh" to recompense him for the very considerable stress involved in his "successful handling of this very complex case".

MONTY PYTHON'S FAMOUS DEAD HORSE SKETCH IN FULL

(Bookshop. Enter customer, who addresses shop assistant.)

John Cleese: *(points to pile of Python anniversary books)* Hello, my good man. I wish to register a complaint. This horse that you are trying to flog me is dead! You are flogging a dead horse!

Michael Palin: No, there's plenty of life in it. Book, CD, DVD, TV documentary…

John Cleese: It is an ex-horse! It has ceased to be! It has shuffled off its mortal coil and joined the choir invisible!

Michael Palin: No, it's not. It's a live stage show at the Royal Albert Hall.

John Cleese: It's a stiff! If it weren't for the fact that some of us have divorces to pay for, it would be six feet under and *(continued for next 94 years)*.

From The Message Boards

Members of the online community respond to the major issues of the day...

Prison population at all-time high

do'nt call it the totle prison poplation *BUT* call it buy it's real name = totle scum – ***Broken_Britan***

I would literally like to see every prisoner serve a minimum of ten years. I would sit in the cell as a public-spirited citizen observer and watch them serve EVERY SINGLE MINUTE without a luxury TV to keep them entertained. – ***Public_Spirited_Citizen***

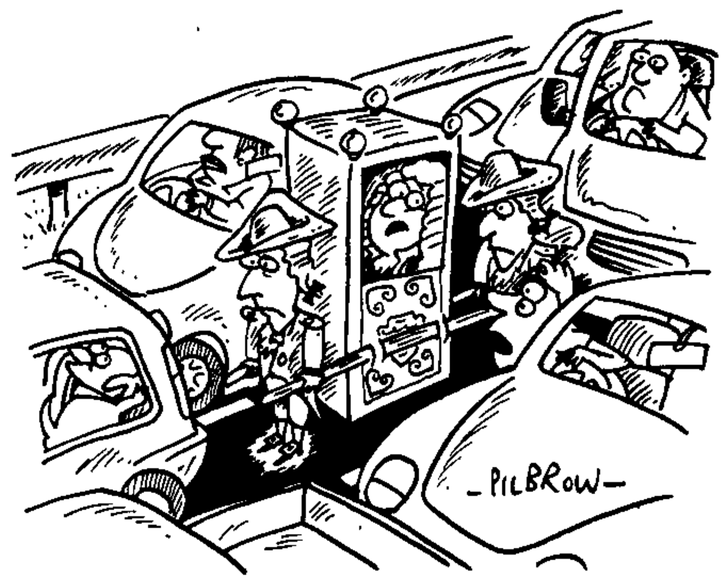
I recently attended a charity golf weekend in Marbella and many of those giving generously of their time had also given generously of their time at Her Majesty's pleasure. That meant learning the ropes at approved school or borstal before progressing to an adult prison – no drugs and computer games, just honest "bird". All are now successful businessmen, with valuable properties in Spain. They would be wonderful role models for young troublemakers, but not one of them wants to return to Brown's Britain. – ***Brown_out***

The old regime certainly taught discipline and self-reliance, and I often wish my own life had taken a different course. As a youngster I was accused of stealing twelve thousand postal orders in a series of armed robberies. Inspired by the Winslow Boy, my parents sacrificed everything, including my inheritance, to clear my name. Bloody annoying actually – a few months in borstal like Stephan Fry and I'd be sitting pretty today. – ***Fit_for_Porpoise***

I head up a Neighbourhood Policing Team, and we are passionate about reducing offending behaviours. Take a recent initiative in an area with unacceptable levels of vandalism and criminal damage. Our project, a community graffiti wall, proved so popular that it has now extended to the surrounding area. The results are there for all to see. Improved levels of self-esteem among both the young people and team members, and no significant increase in violence – ***Alison***

not bein funny but y? cant they jus tortyure them yobb's? – ***Hunny_pot***

"I've super-glued a handle to him for convenience"

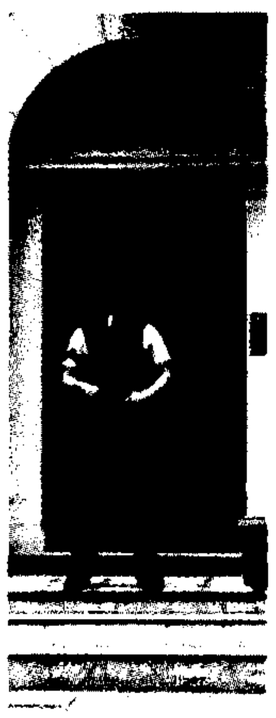


"Been stuck in the traffic long?"

COMMENT

Why is this problem family given police protection while their victims are ignored?

THE armed policeman stands on the doorstep keeping a watchful eye. A few yards away more policemen stand at the gate.



Inside the most dangerous family in Britain live a carefree existence in stark contrast to all those whose lives they have ruined, who must fend for themselves as best they can.

The reign of terror presided over by patriarch Tony and his out-of-control wife, Cherie has gone unpunished. If anything the Blairs have been rewarded for their *(cont. p. 94)*

BBC Radio 3

Opera Highlights

Rigelouto

by Berlusconi

Act One

THE curtain rises on the balcony of the Palazzo Legova where the Robber Baron is having an important breakfast meeting with a number of young female members of the European parliament.

He is however dismayed to find an angry crowd of citizens has gathered to demonstrate against him. They sing the chorus **Silvio Bastardo Corrupto!** *(Nobody should be above the law).*

Horrified by this display of disloyalty Silvio entreats them to remember his good works and particularly his generosity to the young women of the town. He sings the aria **Mille e Tre** *(I have taken a purely professional interest in over a thousand of them).*

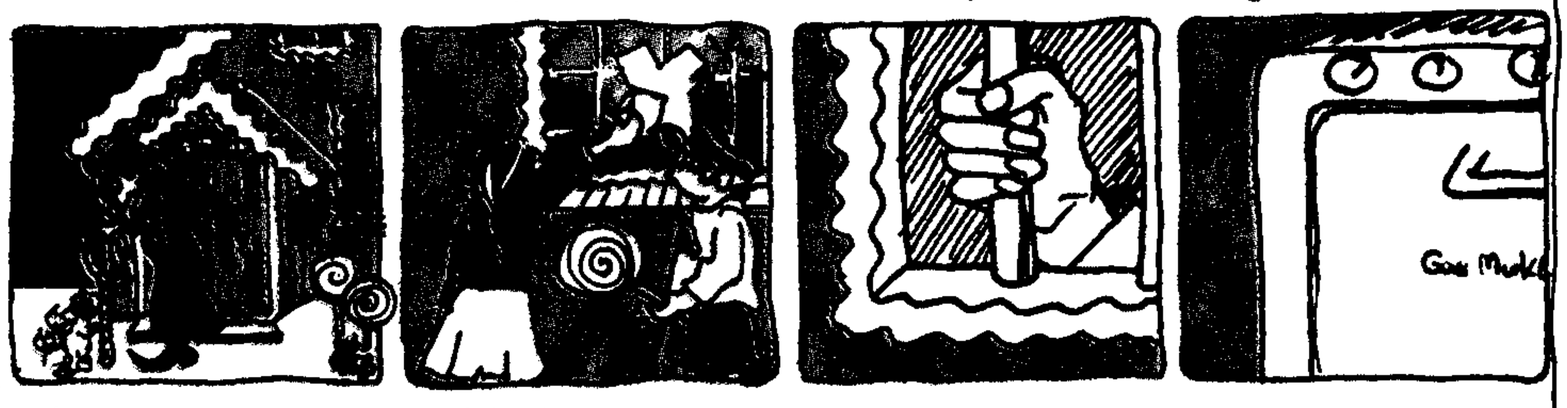
Act Two

We are in the highest court in the land and a chorus of 15 learned judges are considering the Robber Baron's case. His lawyers, Cartero and Fucci sing **Tutti Immuni Silvio** *(My client is guilty but there is nothing you can do about it)*. The judges, however, decide that Silvio is not above the law and sing **Tutti Egali in Legia** *(You're nicked, matey)* and tell him that he must stand trial for fraud, bribing a judge, tax evasion, associating with courtesans, frequenting with minors and bringing the office of the Robber Baron into disrepute.

Act Three

To everyone's surprise, Silvio is undaunted. He explains that under Italian law no-one over 70 can go to jail. He sings **Sono Settanta Tre** *(I am 98)*. He then holds a party in the bedroom of the palazzo and invites all the village maidens to share in his good fortune. They all sing **Viva Silvio! Viva Espagna!** (surely 'Italia'? Ed.)

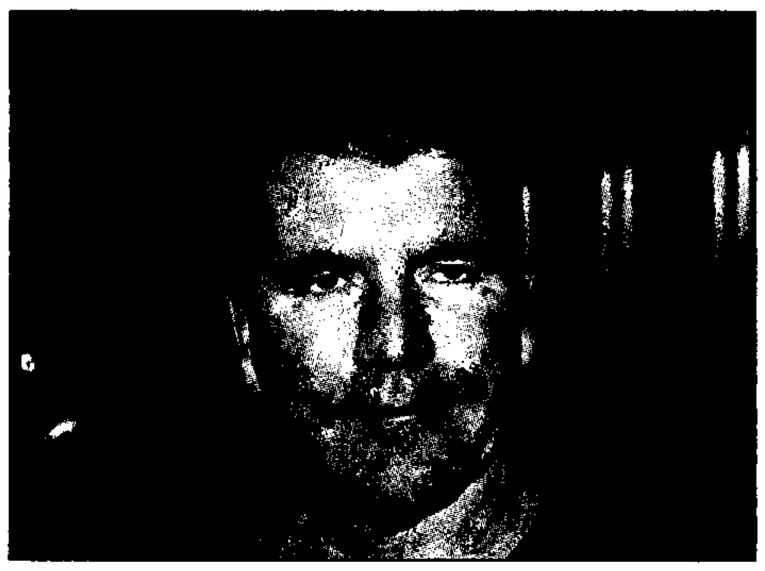
Case Notes Crime Report - Incident at Honeysuckle Cottage



The victim was an elderly woman who, despite her scoliosis and failing eyesight, lived alone in her isolated cottage. Last month two unkempt adolescents came upon her vulnerable home. After breaking her windows and mauling her lintel they encountered the old woman. Initially she tried to placate them with sweets and pastries, the meeting later became fraught. It was necessary to incarcerate Hansel, the elder child. Gretel was set to make restorative justice – working about the garden and house. Horrifyingly, when the frail old woman relaxed her guard, she was hurled into the oven. After releasing her brother they further violated the house and stole her life savings before returning to their feckless father.

Literary Psychologist

DIARY



A FESTSCHRIFT FOR SIMON COWELL

WILLIAM SHAWCROSS, author *Gracious Majesty: The Authorised Biography of Simon Cowell*: From being a vivacious child who, from an early age, delighted in the company of adults as well as children, Cowell blossomed into a young man whose smile and gracious charm won the hearts of cheering crowds wheresoe'er he travelled. "If Simon could sometimes be forthright in his judgements of those he encountered on television talent shows" recalls a senior aide, "That was because he truly cared. He always wanted the best for them, and he believed they deserved nothing less than the truth." Wherever he travelled, at home or abroad, there would always be waving crowds there to greet him. He put a little sunshine into their lives, and, through a combination of dignity, charisma and beautiful tailoring, managed to pulled the people of Britain through the recession.

CORMAC McCARTHY, novelist: Brutal. He could be brutal. But it was a brutality born of hope.

Of love, too.

I feel. He said to each contestant. I feel that you are about to go.

On an incredible journey.

And then he would bid the contestant go through.

To the next round. And the contestant having been bidden would then sing something.

Something that sounded a lot like Carey. Mariah Carey.

But sadly. Though her mother had cancer. And her kid had whooping cough. And her grandmother was knocked down by a bus. She would still not get through.

To the final.

HEATHER MILLS McCARTNEY, philanthropist: I first met Simon Cowell in somewhat unusual circumstances.

Picture the scene if you will. I was but an orphan, barely twelve years of age, alone and starving on the backstreets of London.

I had been taken in by a ruthless gentleman who went by the name of Mr Fagin. He forced me against my will to pick the pockets of wealthy passers-by and fed me very little. If ever I asked for more, he'd shout "MORE?!" and make a song and dance about it.

So there I was, all alone, on the cobbled streets, with horse-drawn carriages clip-clopping by, blind to my dreadful plight.

"Where-ere-ere-ere is love?" I sang. "Does it fall from skies above? Who can say where she may hiiiide? Must I travel far and wiiiiide?" And with that a solitary tear trickled down my grubby cheek.

Just as I was chewing on my last crust, a handsome gentleman in high trousers alighted from a passing carriage.

"Hold it right there," he said. "I'm just blown away by your talent. You made that song your own. I've a feeling you're about to go on an incredible journey and we're going to be hearing a lot more of you in the future. Yes – you are one very special young lady. Congratulations!"

And from that moment on, I followed my dream. Just a few short years later, I was the most famous charity-worker in the world, I was the biggest-selling singer, with a string of number one hits to my name throughout the world, I was on first-name terms with every President and Prime Minister worth bothering about and I was in the running for the Nobel Peace Prize, no less.

So thanks, Simon. Thanks for not turning your back on a little girl with a solitary tear trickling down her grubby cheek.

BARACK OBAMA, President of USA, part-time speech-writer for Mr Cowell: If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible, Simon Cowell is your answer.

Yes, Simon is the answer spoken by young and old, rich and poor, Democrat and Republican, black, white Latino, Asian, Native American, gay, straight disabled and not disabled.

Before Simon came to us, we were none of us aware that America's Got Talent. But Simon fought long and hard to prove to us that we did.

The road ahead will be long. Our climb will be steep. Our stories may be singular, but our admiration for this man is shared. His beacon has never burned brighter.

Simon, you are our world. Your judgements are our judgements. If you tell us we're going through, then go through we will.

A.S. BYATT, novelist: I think in a very real sense that Simon Cowell has, in a truly extraordinary sense, reinvented our world. Robson and Jerome. Leona Lewis. Gareth Gates. Susan Boyle. These are all names that have, in some sort of extraordinary way, altered our view of the known universe. My deepest wish for Simon is that he should heed the call of the literary world to chair next year's Booker Prize. For then, and only then, will we have established for literature the world stature that is surely its due.

SIR DAVID HARE, playwright:

COWELL: Your name?

BOYLE: Susan Boyle.

COWELL: Age?

BOYLE: 48.

COWELL: And what do you think of the state of our nation, Susan?

BOYLE: I feel we are still in the grip of post-imperial decline, Simon.

COWELL: OK, darling. Let's see what you can do.

BOYLE: *"I dreamed a dream in time gone by*
When hope was high
And life worth living
I dreamed that love would never die
I dreamed that God would be forgiving.."

COWELL: The Establishment will never forgive you for that, Susan. By dreaming your dream, you have torn down the scaffolding from this ruin we persist in calling a nation. You have taught us what it is to have a heart. Your smile is the language of love, Susan. You're definitely going through to the semi-final.

SUSAN: Thank you, Simon. Thank you with all my heart. Yours is the truth that will last eternally, and rightly so, for by pointing out the need for social change you have shown us the way forward.

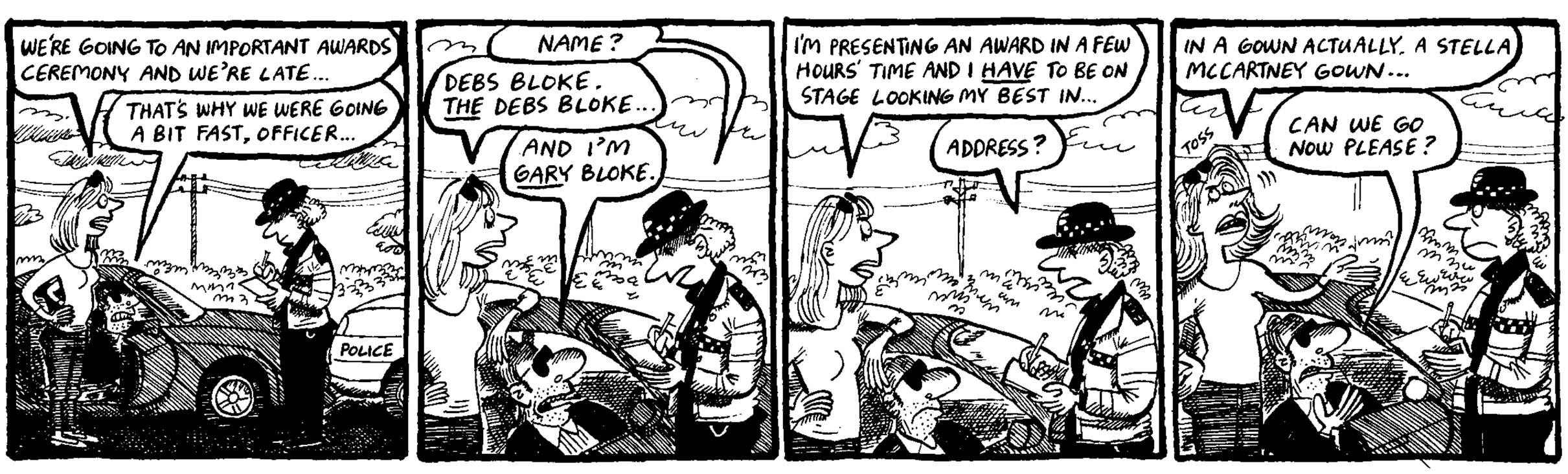
(from The Permanent Factor)

SARAH BROWN: Like me, and my good friends Kathy (Lette), Kirsty (Allsop), Naomi (Campbell), Meera (Syall) and Lauren (Laverne) Simon's a completely normal person, and will always make time for people, for our family, for his friends and anyone who needs him – that's part of the reason I love him as much as I do. I know that he thinks about this country every time before he goes to sleep. Gordon and I will always welcome him to our little house in Downing Street because he adds colour to our lives, and there's nothing he doesn't know about how to get us out of this recession. He has a tough job and we wouldn't want it for the world but each time I am thankful that he's the one who has it; that he's the one who's brought a touch of stardom to this, our humble home, that he's the one who's making the calls and putting Britain on the map.

SIMON COWELL: I'll be honest. I'd be happy to contribute to this Festschrift in my honour but, sorry guys, the money's not good enough. Next!

As told to

CRAIG BROWN


WE'RE GOING TO AN IMPORTANT AWARDS CEREMONY AND WE'RE LATE...
THAT'S WHY WE WERE GOING A BIT FAST, OFFICER...
POLICE
NAME?
DEBS BLOKE. THE DEBS BLOKE...
AND I'M GARY BLOKE.
I'M PRESENTING AN AWARD IN A FEW HOURS' TIME AND I HAVE TO BE ON STAGE LOOKING MY BEST IN...
ADDRESS?
IN A GOWN ACTUALLY. A STELLA MCCARTNEY GOWN...
TOSS
CAN WE GO NOW PLEASE?

Literary Review

Future schlock

The Year of the Flood
Margaret Atwood
(Bloomsbury, £18.99)
Transition
Iain Banks
(Little, Brown, £18.99)

FUTURE-IMPERFECT, world-gone-wrong dystopia fiction is back.

Margaret Atwood and Iain Banks's variations on this time-worn theme recently appeared within a week of each other. At 434 and 404 pages respectively, they are not for the faint-hearted: half a century ago, John Wyndham and John Christopher, the genre's founding fathers, used to do their stuff about man-eating plants and the death of grass at half the length, but there you are.

Mags's opus is a companion piece to 2003's *Oryx and Crake*, in which the globe has been ravaged by an exceptionally nasty viral tsunami, and the only survivors are the tattered remnant of an eco-religious sect known as "God's Gardeners". Much of the fun comes in piecing together what happened pre-plague, and Ms A has a terrific time following one or two regrettable modern tendencies home to their logical conclusion: everything privatised, the poor confined to "pleeblands", criminals despatched to gladiatorial combat in the "paintball" zones and so on. You couldn't really call this sci-fi, and Mags turns very hoity-toity if you do: her preferred term is, ah, "speculative fiction".

The marketing take on *Transition*, on the other hand, is that it represents a bridge between Banksy's mainstream novels and the techno-anorak *oeuvre* (*The Player of Games*, *Against a Dark Background*, etc) on which he has been irregularly engaged since the mid-1980s. Like many another Banks excursion, it's one of those alternate world novels in which the planet is unknowingly in thrall to a band of secret guardians, here an outfit called "the Concern", the members of whose high command have the ability to swap bodies and universes at the drop of a hat.

They include "Patient 8262", an ex-enforcer now chained to a hospital bed; "Adrian", a *faux*-cockney hedge-fund exec; "Temudjin Oh", the hard-working maverick assassin; and a torture-specialist known as "The Philosopher". All the usual signature marks of a Banks novel are on display, which is to say that there are liberal helpings of heavy-

duty sex and drug philosophising (a whole four pages worth from coke-savvy Adrian) while the hard-core jollies are laid on with just enough relish to make you wonder about the mind of the person who contrived them.

What else? Mags worries about the ecological consequences of modern science, and offers a blasted, post-apocalyptic terrain stalked by the hybrid products of organ-farming and genetic splicing. Iain, apart from a pious denunciation or two of the capitalist system and some nods to the War on Terror, likes explosions and violent death. Atwood can write. Banks, whose characters all speak according to type ("Alors, my sweet, my pretty" warbles the French lady) gets by on smash and grab. *The Year of the Flood*, consequently, ends up genuinely engaged with some of the issues of the moment. *Transition*, alternatively, is a clever and slightly troubling meditation from a man who clearly can't wait to get back to the Dungeons and Dragons console for some really hot action.

Interviewed on Radio 4 sometime in the summer, Banks offered some choice remarks about the "Oxbridge snobs" who regularly diss his books, deny him the Booker and so on. But none of the objections to *Transition* has much to do with snobbery. Like half-a-dozen other of Banks's finest, it reads as if it was written in about three weeks by someone who can't be bothered to join up those vexing dots of character and motivation. As Atwood demonstrates, in her patient, ruminative and often very funny way, a decent stab at a dystopia or an alternate world takes, well, *time*.

Books & Bookmen

■ "WATERSTONES Hub 'catastrophic', publishers claim," was the headline in trade organ *The Bookseller* three weeks after the *Eye* revealed that, er, publishers were claiming the centralised and outsourced "hub" that the chain had installed to take care of all stock was a catastrophe (*Eye* 1245).

"There were problems with delivery, particularly on backlist titles, books for events and author signings," the *Bookseller* noted on its website. "It has emerged that Jamie Oliver's latest title, *Jamie's America*, heavily supported by the chain, was delivered direct to stores at the beginning of September as a result of the problems."

What was the reaction of Waterstone's MD Gerry Johnson – whose baby the Hub very much is – to this news? He promptly posted a message on the company's internal computer system – but not a terribly reassuring one. "Thebookseller.com is not necessary for our day-to-day business activities and the content can be misleading," staff were informed. "Therefore, from today, it becomes a restricted site and access has been removed."

Staff in the chain's stores, incredulous at the idea that as booksellers it was unnecessary for them to keep informed about bookselling, have reacted by firing up their home computers and adding well over 200 comments to the offending article. Some claim that not just Jamie Oliver but "all of our store's Super Thursday titles came directly from the publisher", bypassing the Hub altogether to ensure that the vast raft of potential Christmas big-sellers published on 1 October arrived in shops without any hitches.

"Even some of our core stock, the biggest selling paperbacks, are taking weeks to arrive," wrote another. "I can't bear to pick up the phone at work anymore because I know its going to be a customer (rightly) complaining that the book they ordered a month previously hasn't come in yet," chimed in a colleague, while another complained that "I used to love working for Waterstone's but this last month has made it unbearable. All staff can see that the Hub is not working but still we get messages from above stating that all is fine. If they were being straight with staff and keeping us informed then maybe we would have no need to go onto this site."

Yet others brought tales of books arriving from the hub wrongly-priced, too damaged to sell, or in one case, "a whole pile of £1 books with 'save £2' stickers on them. Maybe we will actually end up having to pay people to buy books from us."

Publishers joined in to back up the claims as well. "I published a book last month where the author had national TV appearances, national radio and a number of press interviews. There was about a week of pretty solid media activity, much more than we ever thought possible. Not a single copy was available in any Waterstone's branch."

Last word to one Waterstone's staffer plaintively calling themselves "Bookseller": "Having worked in this bookshop for over 8 years, I will be resigning before xmas. I am horrified at the total incompetence of it all. Gerry is in complete denial."

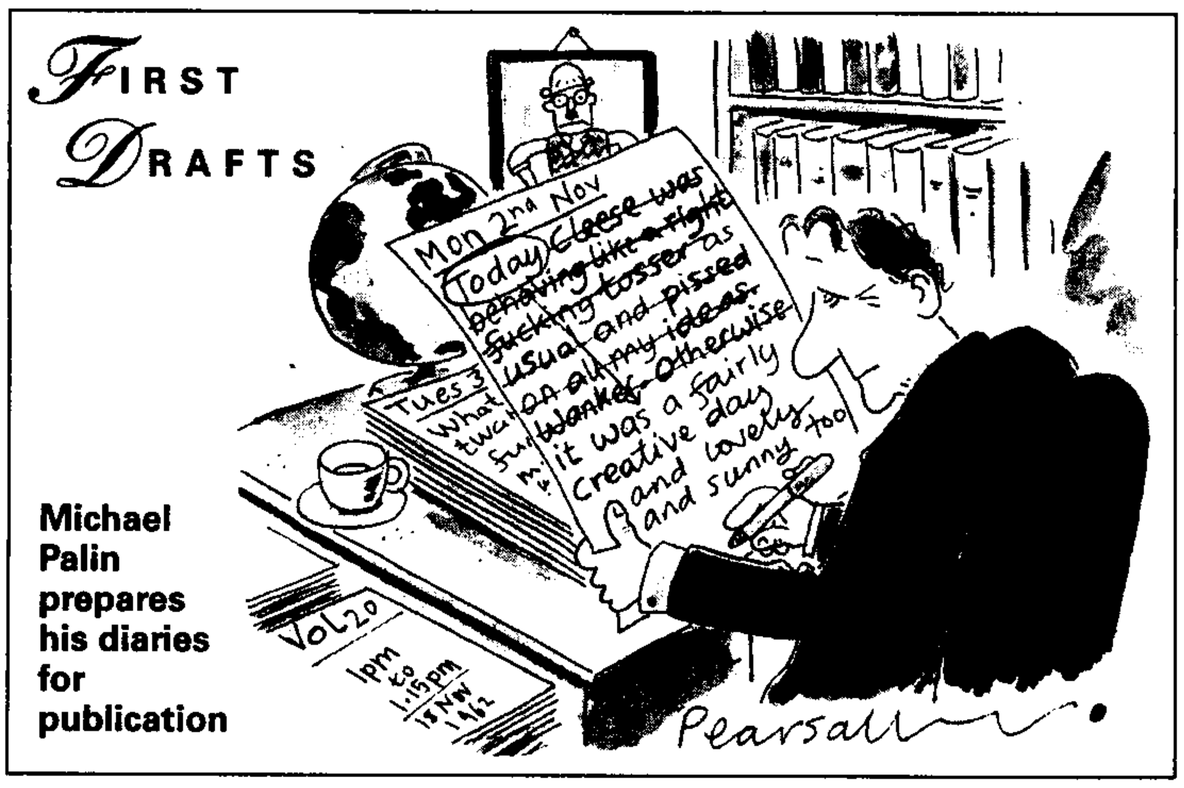
■ THE number of bookshops on Charing Cross Road has already dwindled in recent years, and one of the street's biggest landlords isn't helping by putting one of the long-established book sellers on a precarious short term lease.

Second-hand bookshop Quinto was closed suddenly in August, with notices appearing in the windows revealing that the landlords, Soho Housing Association (SHA), had changed the locks – giving many loyal customers a fright. A week later, the shop reopened, with the lease reassigned from Pharos International, which went into administration last year, to current owners, Hay Cinema Bookshop, a former Pharos subsidiary. But the new lease is a short-term one lasting just 12 months with a four-week notice period for the landlord, leading to fears that SHA and its agent EA Shaw have alternative plans for the prime West End location.

SHA, which is the registered social landlord for the flats above the shops, still refers to its "parade of bookshops" on its website, but of the 13 small units, only four now sell books (one sells new books, the others second hand). The other shops sell everything from sushi to tobacco. "It is a challenging time for specialist booksellers," say SHA. "We are committed to preserving the overall character of the parade and will continue to let to booksellers as long as we can find tenants who are able to pay a fair, unsubsidised, market rent."

Hay Cinema boss Greg Coombes told the *Eye* that the shop isn't asking for any special treatment and is paying a market rent – it just wants a lease that puts it in a reasonable position for the future.

WE CAN'T HAVE PEOPLE SPILLING THE BEANS ABOUT WHAT GOES ON AT MIS
OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT
THAT'S OUR JOB!
OFFICIAL HISTORY OF MIS



Michael Palin prepares his diaries for publication

■ ASK A poet to head a poetry prize judging panel, and you can expect accusations of the result being a matey fix. But choosing someone else besotted with verse has pitfalls, too, as last week's presentation of the Forward prizes showed.

Josephine Hart, aka Lady Saatchi, is a novelist who also organises successful poetry readings graced by leading luvvies. She thinks poetry is "food for the soul", and reveres work by famous writers that lends itself to being read out loud by famous actors. Contemporary writing is not her forte.

Her evening began badly – she delayed the ceremony (which needed to start on time to meet the requirements of Radio 4's *Front Row*) by arriving late – and continued farcically, as if co-scripted by Kingsley Amis and Helen Fielding. The obvious trap when pronouncing the name of Robin Robertson, winner of best single poem, was duly stumbled into; moving on to the best first collection category, her hapless announcement that "we chose Sian Hughes..." prompted joyous applause from Hughes's friends, stifled when Hart corrected herself by saying that she had only been chosen for the shortlist, and Emma Jones was the winner. Almost as embarrassingly, in naming Don Paterson (whose work is clearly too knotty and insufficiently soul-nourishing for her taste) as the best collection winner she signalled that she'd been outvoted by naughtily quoting lines she admired by one of the losing shortlistees.

Managing two blunders and one put-down in reading out the results of three prizes is a record likely to stand for some time.

■ IN A money-saving wheeze, the books pages of the *Telegraph* are now bizarrely sent to Australia for sub-editing and then returned to the UK to go off for printing. The risk of errors is obvious.

A recent *Sunday Telegraph* review by Anthony Howard (presumably phoned in, risking mis-hearing by the copytaker) of Shirley Williams's autobiography said her relationship with Anthony King "came to nothing in the face of the Vatican's stoners in moving to grant her an annulment of her original marriage to Bernard Williams". Have the cardinals been using class-A narcotics to produce the famous smoke that signals a major announcement? Or should "stoners" actually have been "slowness"? Answers on a postcard from Sydney.

■ MAYBE it's time to stop taking the Nobel Prize for Literature seriously.

The Swedish academy, the body that chooses laureates, is incapable of specifying a date in advance for each year's announcement, incapable of keeping secrets (the last two results have plainly been leaked), and is led by a permanent secretary openly and comically at loggerheads with his predecessor. Horace Engdahl, secretary for 10 years, stepped down with eloquent swiftness after a notorious outburst last year in which he explained the recent near-absence of US laureates by complaining that American writers were "too insular". His successor, Peter Englund – a historian rather than a literature specialist – at once dismissed this view and, in effect, apologised in advance for the choice last week of yet another European, Herta Muller. Don't blame me, I'm stuck with the bias of the unchanging academy worthies seemed to be the message.

What the line-up of the last 10 laureates – Gao, Naipaul, Kertesz, Coetzee, Jelinek, Pinter, Pamuk, Lessing, Le Clezio, Muller, the last six all European – suggests, though, is not so much a bias against as a bias towards. With the still puzzling exception of Le Clezio, all be can seen as either witnesses to bloodshed, injustice or oppression (including oppression of women by men) or writers, like Pinter or Pamuk, who have spoken out against them (having lived in more than one country also seems to count in candidates' favour). This perhaps explains why only one North American has been selected in the past 20 years, and why that was Toni Morrison.

But perhaps finding method in the 18-strong academy's madness is too generous. Expectations of dottiness derived from the strange, purple evocations of each winner are amply fulfilled by a visit to its website.

Membership is for life, so Engdahl remains. One member, a Proust translator, is 91, and there are five octogenarians. Chair 1 is (without explanation) "vacant", while in place of the usual flowery, lengthy profile, the biog for Kerstin Ekman, Chair 15, simply states that she "does not take an active part in the work of the academy". Whether her place is taken by a tub of lard, or of something less pleasant, is not revealed.

'Bookworm'

LIBRARY NEWS

■ A GROUP of MPs investigating the state of public libraries has uncovered a "bleak national picture" and "woefully inadequate" leadership. Libraries had also lost "confidence, status and direction" and lacked a sense of purpose, the report by the all-party parliamentary group on libraries said this month.

That lack of direction is still evident as yet more libraries face the axe (despite the recent u-turn in Wirral, where library campaigners were thrilled when the council revoked plans to close 11 libraries). In North Somerset, three villages were told in September that their libraries faced the chop to help the council balance its books. Congresbury, Backwell and Banwell libraries are to close in an effort to shave £100,000 off the libraries budget.

Closing Congresbury library seems especially unlikely to save much as the council currently has use of the building for a peppercorn rent of £1 a year. And relocating the district IT hub which is located in Congresbury will cost three times the library's annual £20,000 running cost, say campaigners.

■ THE University of Cumbria's announcement that it has "increased... the amount of space available for students and teachers" is an impressive example of looking on the bright side. The space at the Brampton Road campus in Carlisle has been freed up by, er, closing the campus library!

Students must now trek to the other Carlisle campus to use the remaining library, where they will find only the most popular items from Brampton Road; the rest are in storage.

Pseuds Corner

[Manager Phil] Brown, 50, was in philosophical mood following the decision to walk the [Hull City] team over the bridge. 'We were looking for clarity. Did we find it? Absolutely. When you're jogging you can't really speak. When you're walking, you can. So that's what we did. There are analogies if you want them. The bridge was built with engineering based on the fact that when an ill wind blows, it becomes strong, a sturdier sculpture. As far as we were concerned, we just went for a walk,' he said.

JO ADETUNJI, *Guardian*

She is not liking the way the album is sounding on the Mac (we can't find a sound system in her friend's flat), so decides we should listen to it in her new limo (new driver). We drive around the city, listening to her raw songs of survival, destruction and rage. She lies back, cigarette in one hand, legs outstretched, foot on the open window. She is singing along to her own tunes and tells me this is better than drugs. Down at Ground Zero we admire the hole.

Chrissie Iley meets Courtney Love, ***Sunday Times Style*** **Magazine**

Gervais could play Beckett – and he may. But it's more likely, I think, that he will draw his comedy close to Beckett's edge. As yet he has gone from the office (that calm nightmare in British life) to the film set (that model of derangement). But picture him in a hospital, a place that helplessly kills the healthy and lets tottering cripples stagger away. Ricky Gervais means to be noticed, and we can expect his subject areas to get more deadly with every advance. Important comedians can drive you crazy.'

DAVID THOMSON, ***Guardian***

Gaga described her look as 'New York avante-garde fashion monster' and when asked who her style icons are, she replies in a snap, 'Grace Jones and Jesus – I love loincloths.'

HADLEY FREEMAN, ***Vogue***

The final track, 'I'm Alive', is 26 seconds long, features nothing but four words and some curious banging, and is the most moving thing I've heard in ages.'

DAVID QUANTICK on Yoko Ono's new CD in ***Uncut*** **magazine**

'My earliest memory is slipping out of my mother's thighs and looking at surgical instruments on a table in an operating theatre. Many people do remember their births but they deny it'

YOKO ONO, ***Observer***

CONTRIBUTORS: 'chuffedtobeblue', Simon Blackmore, John Ridenhauer, Lindsay Scott, Anon, E.J. Ruane.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

PFI

Unpalatable & uncuttable

HOW much are the country's 640 private finance initiative schools, hospitals and the like costing taxpayers... and what can be done to cut the bills? Sadly "a lot" and "nothing" are the answers.

Non-negotiable payments under PFI contracts are running at more than £8bn on projects with "capital value" (broadly the cost of building the school or hospital) of £63bn. But even these numbers mask the difficulty of coping with PFI in practice.

Hardest hit are education and health. The latter's budget has £1.2bn in PFI costs to shoulder; and the effect in some trusts has been crippling.

A new Audit Commission report shows six acute hospital trusts in England still burdened by huge deficits despite cuts and efforts at "turnaround". Much of this is put down to poor financial management, but five of the trusts operate from buildings built and financed through PFI and so are saddled with massive extra costs too. They are:

- Barking, Havering and Redbridge Hospitals trust, which has a £35m deficit accounted for by a £238m PFI hospital costing £45m a year;
- Bromley Hospitals trust (£4.9m deficit; £120m PFI hospital; annual cost: £22m);
- Buckingham Hospitals trust (£2.745m deficit; £45m PFI hospital; annual cost: £13m);
- Queen Elizabeth Hospital Trust, Greenwich (£5.5m deficit; £96m PFI hospital; annual cost: £24m);
- West Middlesex University Hospital trust (£3.5m deficit; £60m PFI hospital; annual cost: £12m).

By contrast only one of 130 non-PFI acute hospital trusts has a deficit.

Across government, the full set of PFI deals valued at £63bn will eventually cost taxpayers a whopping £246bn on the Treasury's latest figures. But with a further 115 schemes valued at £13bn "in procurement", this, and the annual bill, are already set to rise significantly. Thus, though every political party is committed to spending cuts, unless some very big deals are reneged on, PFI payments will simultaneously go up.

The deals *won't* be pulled because PFI remains politically useful. Despite Gordon Brown's declaration after the financial meltdown last year that "it was wrong to have off-balance sheet activities", the Treasury recently announced that PFI will continue to be excluded from government debt figures.

So PFI will roll on regardless and programmes such as the bizarre deal to privatize military training, or the flagship Building Schools for the Future scheme, will not be reined in.

Growth areas are waste (ha ha!) treatment, where £2.75bn of rubbish processing is in the PFI pipeline to go with the £1.8bn worth of deals already signed by councils; and education.

As education secretary Ed Balls struggles to find the £2bn savings he has hinted at, and at the same time has to cope with an annual PFI bill of more than £700m, another £3bn worth of schools are being negotiated under BSF, even though the scheme was recently panned by the Commons public accounts committee as ludicrously expensive (but very profitable for bankers and consultants). These projects will soon cost the schools budget at least a further £400m a year (more than the £250m a year Balls says he will save by cutting senior teachers' jobs). And if the full £55bn programme goes through, as remains promised, the soon-to-be-slashed education budget will eventually carry an £8bn annual PFI millstone.

Whether there will be enough left in the pot to teach pupils how not to screw up public finances for *their* children is at best uncertain.

LOCKERBIE LATEST

The three million dollar questions

THE latest bundle of documents released by lawyers attempting to prove the innocence of the "Lockerbie bomber" show that the evidence of the key witness, the Maltese shopkeeper who supposedly "identified" Ali Mohmed al-Megrahi, was of no value in getting to the truth behind the terrorist atrocity. Despite this, Tony Gauci was paid a staggering $2m "reward" by the US authorities; and a further $1m went to his brother Paul, who never even gave evidence but kept his brother on message.

The *Eye* has long documented many problems with Gauci's "identification" of Megrahi as the man who bought the clothing which was later found to have been packed round the bomb which blew up Pan Am 103 over the skies of Lockerbie in December 1988 (not least that he also "identified" another man, a Palestinian terrorist). But the release of the material – much of it wrongly kept secret from Megrahi's trial and only recently uncovered by the Scottish Criminal Cases Review Commission (SCCRC) – shows how deeply flawed and tainted by "reward" his evidence was.

Gauci, it seems, was an extremely suggestible person who was seen at least 50 times by investigators, formally interviewed at least 23 times and kept giving differing accounts about the purchaser, the clothes he bought, when they were bought, and about whether he even stocked in his shop the type of clothes found.

> "It was a consistent pattern during the whole trial that – as an apparent result of political interest and considerations – efforts were undertaken to withhold substantial information from the court."
> *Dr Hans Kochler, UN observer*

Further, there was another witness, David Wright, who says he was in Gauci's shop on the day that two men – not one – had come in to buy the clothing. Not only was his evidence hidden from the court, it was never even followed up by police.

Every rule in the legal book guarding against false identification, so often the feature in miscarriage of justice cases, had been broken. Yet Gauci's testimony at the Zeist trial became central to the conviction of Megrahi after the rest of case against him had crumbled.

Financial inducement for witnesses is largely alien to our justice system; it is accepted that such payments challenge the credibility of a witness. But such government rewards can be part of the US system, and Gauci and his brother were not the only ones to have been handsomely remunerated – and tainted – by the US authorities in the Pam Am case. In fact, one of the disturbing features of the case is that although it was ostensibly a Scottish investigation and prosecution, behind the scenes the US was pulling many of the strings.

- US officials sat alongside Scottish lawyers at the prosecution desk. Jim Swire, father of Flora, who perished on the flight, even saw witnesses looking to them for guidance during questioning.
- US officials were responsible before and during the trial for deciding what information was (or was not) disclosed.
- The UK government is still claiming public interest immunity on material in the case on behalf of a foreign power, believed to be the US.
- It was the US authorities who were behind the decision to shift the focus of the investigation to Libya and Megrahi when there remained (as the last *Eye* explained) more evidence pointing towards the Syrian and Iranian-backed Palestinian terrorist groups the PFLP and PPF, who had been operating in Frankfurt, Sweden, Cyprus – and Malta.
- US officials had total control over or paid the three key witnesses in the case.

The man who put Megrahi in the frame in the first place, Abdul Giaka, was also on the US payroll. He was a Libyan based in Malta, who pretended to be a high-ranking member of the Libyan intelligence organisation JSO but who was exposed during the trial as a liar, a cheat and a fantasist. He had claimed to be related to the former King of Libya when he clearly wasn't, and he had also claimed that Colonel Gaddafi was a freemason. Yet so desperate was the prosecution that Giaka was billed as the "star witness".

To earn his monthly pay, Giaka had first mentioned the name Megrahi to his CIA handlers simply as a fellow intelligence officer who passed through Malta on 7 December 1988 – two weeks before the bombing. But it was not until July 1991 that he suddenly provided the crucial "evidence" behind the indictment of Megrahi and airline worker Lamin Fhimah: that on 21 December 1988 the pair had smuggled the bomb hidden in a Samsonite briefcase at Malta airport on to the flight which connected with the Pan Am feeder flight from Frankfurt.

Giaka was "exposed" as a fake during the trial when, after a protracted legal wrangle, the defence obtained a series of CIA cables that undermined the evidence he was being carefully guided through in the witness box. It was clear that he was prepared to concoct "evidence" to obtain money and passage to the US. The judges concluded that Giaka's evidence was "at best grossly exaggerated at worst simply untrue, and all of it largely motivated by financial considerations". But such was the influence of the Americans in court that the Scottish prosecutors tried to persuade the court that the cables contained nothing that would assist the defence.

Without Giaka's evidence there was no case against Fhimah at all, and he was acquitted. In fact, there was suddenly no evidence that the bomb was ever loaded in Malta at all, causing some to question why Megrahi was not then also acquitted. (And as *Eye* readers know well, the break-in at Heathrow near the Pan Am bay on the day of the bombing was not disclosed to the court.)

Unfortunately for Megrahi, there were two other "key" witnesses. Gauci was one; the second was Edwin Bollier, the manufacturer of the Mebo timing device said to been used in the bomb. Bollier had given long, confused and contradictory evidence to the trial in which he admitted supplying such devices to Libya and testing them in the Libyan desert. He also said he had business dealings with Megrahi and rented office space to a company linked to Megrahi. But it became clear that he had not actually met Megrahi until two years after the supply of timers.

> "Virtually all people presented by the prosecution as key witnesses were proven to lack credibility to a very high extent, in certain cases even having openly lied to the court."
> *Dr Kochler*

However, like Giaka, Bollier had spent long periods in US government accommodation being questioned – and, like Giaka, the judges were forced to conclude his evidence was "inconsistent and contradictory" and that most of it could not be relied upon. Later Bollier was to claim – although who knows if it is true – that he too had been offered large sums of money by the US authorities.

Without Bollier, that only left the highly questionable identification evidence of Gauci upon which the judges convicted Megrahi. With that also now totally discredited by the release of material unearthed by the Scottish Criminal Cases Review Commission, what is there left upon which anyone can justify still labelling Megrahi as the Lockerbie bomber?

COURT SECRECY

Chickens Supreme

IN A speech to George Washington University last year, justice secretary Jack Straw bragged that Labour's decision to replace the fuddy-duddy law lords with a US-style supreme court would allow American openness to flourish in repressed Britain.

"The highest court in the land for far too long has been beyond the reach or understanding of a great number of the British public," he declared. He was giving the Brits a "transparent" supreme court – "visible to the public as a court, and not as a committee of the upper house of our legislature".

Alas, members of the public trying to make sense of the new court will find it remains as far from their understanding as the old one; maybe further. The judiciary's preference for secrecy still flourishes despite the reform, and has led to judges hiding cases from public view behind a plethora of pseudonyms.

The supreme court's first hearing was its review of the court of appeal's decision in the snappily titled case of *A, K, M, & G v HM Treasury*. An outsider who wandered in would have gathered that *A, K, M & G* had gone to court to contest the Treasury's right to enforce a UN order to treat them as suspected terrorists whose assets must be frozen. But who were *A, K, M & G*, and why were the authorities claiming they were linked to radical Islam?

Answer came there none. Despite the ancient demand that the public must see justice done in the open, so that potential witnesses can be alerted and observers can make sure that judges do not behave arbitrarily, the high court and court of appeal had issued gagging orders.

As Geoffrey Robertson QC told the supreme court, the judges had not given notice to the press that they were planning to submerge the case in "an alphabet soup" of pseudonyms and had not given reasons for their decision; they had ordered secrecy as an automatic reflex. And from behind the cloak of anonymity, the grateful *A, K, M* and *G* have been issuing press releases denouncing the government ever since, without anyone being able to check if they were true.

After much debate, the learned judges allowed a shaft of daylight to fall on proceedings and decided that the public could be told that *G* was one Mohammed al Ghabra, a 29-year-old Syrian living in east London. Why the courts had kept his identity secret in the first place was anyone's guess. Along with the UN, the Bank of England had already named him as an al-Qaeda supporter in 2006, while the US Treasury had gone further and publicly alleged that he supported al-Qaeda "and other violent jihadist groups, facilitating travel for recruits seeking to meet with al-Qaeda leaders and take part in terrorist training".

But what of *A, K* and *M*? Could we be told who they were? The judges were so stumped by the polite request they said they would need a fortnight to consider it. At the time the *Eye* went to press, they were still considering it.

Next up before the highest court in the land will be the case of *AM*, a Somali who married a British woman, versus Entry Clearance Officer, who refused to let him move here. Anyone who looks up the dispute on the internet can find out who *AM* is, because Lord Justice Maurice Kay said that "anonymity is unnecessary in this case". Nevertheless, the system still allows *AM* to hide behind his initials at the supreme court.

The claims of *AM* and *A, K, M* and *G* are mere appetisers, however, for the feast of farce in store when the case of *A v B* reaches the supreme court. Officially, all we are allowed to know is that *A* (or maybe *B*) is a government official and *B* (or maybe *A*) is a civil servant.

As most of legal London knows, he is a senior, highly decorated MI5 officer who has been at the heart of anti-terror intelligence operations for years. On retirement, he wrote a thoughtful autobiography, which criticised MI5's handling of field officers. The naïve might have thought that ministers responsible for MI5 and indeed his former colleagues could have profited from taking his views onboard. But, inevitably, MI5 wants the book banned and is using the shadowy Investigatory Powers Tribunal to do the banning in secret. The tribunal was meant to deal with claims from suspected terrorists.

Quite disgracefully, the appeal court has gone along with an extension of its remit to allow it to deny a fair public hearing to a distinguished public servant. To date, there is no indication that the supreme court will allow the officer to identify himself or allow the public to know officially that MI5 is back in the book-banning business.

"Where there is no publicity, there is no justice," thundered Jeremy Bentham in 1825. "Publicity is the very soul of justice. It is the keenest spur to exertion and the surest of all guards against improbity. It keeps the judge himself while trying under trial."

Almost 200 years on, the judges of the supreme court remain as keen as their 19th-century predecessors to stop the prying eyes of the press and public judging them while they judge others.

'Ratbiter'

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Augean stable

WITH the waste repository at Drigg, in Cumbria, filling up and the UK's ancient nuclear power stations heading for decommissioning, waste management firm Augean plc is hoping to cash in by dumping radioactive material at a landfill site near Peterborough.

Its "East Northants Resource Management Facility", formerly known as King's Cliffe Landfill (pictured), has been accepting other kinds of hazardous waste since 2002. If it gets the go-ahead, Augean would also like to take up to 249,999 tonnes of "low level" radioactive waste a year from hospitals and science labs, as well as soil and construction material from the decommissioning of power stations.

While Augean's bosses say the waste will present an "insignificant risk to the public or our staff", given the site's history locals can be forgiven for feeling jumpy. Waste firms using King's Cliffe haven't always respected the safety laws.

In 2007 Corby magistrates fined eight different waste disposal firms for 18 offences related to attempting to illegally dispose of liquid and flammable waste at the site. Such products are banned there because of the risk that they might damage the lining that prevents toxins leaching out of the landfill into the surrounding area.

The fined companies included waste giants Biffa and Veolia. Biffa was condemned as "reckless" for sending mislabelled flammable liquid aerosol hairsprays to be dumped at King's Cliffe, while Veolia sent drums of jars and vials containing various liquids that Environment Agency tests found could have damaged the liner. Other inappropriate waste sent to the site included a 205-litre drum of hydrochloric acid with no labels; not to mention creosote and liquid detergents.

No wonder the Waste Watchers campaign group is unhappy that radioactive material might now be added to the mix. This month East Northants district council voted to oppose the plan, but Northamptonshire county council will make a decision in November.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Whitehall farce

SLIPPED out over the summer was the government response to the public accounts committee's critical report on publicly-owned international Development fund CDC (see *Eye* 1236). To say the Department for International Development's reply was complacent and sloppy would be generous.

One of the MPs' uncomplimentary findings had been that the pay of CDC chief executive Richard Laing (£970,000, excluding pension, in 2007), largely determined by financial results, reflected "too much emphasis on financial performance and too little on poverty reduction".

DfID's lame response to this was that profit equates to development. "85 percent of the World Bank's [International Finance Corporation] – supported projects in 2008 showed a direct correlation between project development results and IFC investment returns. Financial performance is therefore a good proxy for the likely impact that CDC investment will have on the Department's objective of poverty reduction."

Thus it is that CDC bosses are encouraged to make as much money as possible and have abandoned areas such as food production in favour of more profitable businesses that attract private money anyway such as mining, banking and, er, shopping centres.

In fact the IFC comparison is spurious and confuses cause and effect. The IFC evaluation report that DfID cites goes on to conclude: "Pursuing development effectiveness need not come at the expense of IFC profitability on its investments" – which is quite different to showing that profits themselves generate development.

The evidence in fact points to the value of how CDC *used* to operate, funding well-managed grassroots investments, around half in agriculture, that would return around 5 percent. That was before it began to chase profit in the 1990s and then, in 2004, flogged off its fund management arm to its own bosses – as Actis – for peanuts (*Eyes passim*). Now the fund managers shuffle CDC's money around, looking for the fattest profits, while Whitehall makes half-baked claims that this is "development".

Stupid letter of the week

***PRIVATE Eye* reader Mark Levesley was perplexed to receive a baffling message from an airline after his baggage was lost on a recent flight.**

"< about us contacting you belongings. Thank personal your without destination at arrive to is it stressful how appreciate do luggage. I with problem a had that sorry very am>"

Of course, international travellers expect to run into language problems occasionally. But which airline has such trouble with the English language? Er, British Airways!

HEALTH CHECK

PARKHILL

Doncaster ravers

HOW do the bosses at NHS audit and anti-fraud advisory agency Parkhill generate the hundreds of thousands of pounds they pay themselves through private service companies (see last *Eye*)? That, it seems, is what the NHS's central counter-fraud and security management services unit (CFSMS) is asking.

Back in 2006 a series of whistleblowers reported Parkhill to CFSMS, alleging that it was using various tricks to charge clients (hospitals and health trusts, ie the taxpayer) for work that wasn't really being done, prompting an investigation.

When the *Eye* asked about it three weeks ago, Parkhill founder and chief executive Ivan Doncaster claimed the agency was in the clear: "The CFSMS investigation has been concluded and we have been advised that CFSMS will take no further action…" Really? CFSMS tells the *Eye* that "there are outstanding matters not yet concluded".

And no wonder. Evidence seen by the *Eye* shows Parkhill beancounters claiming to work up to 17.75 hours in a day, which would demand working from 6.15 am to midnight with no break. With trusts charged by the hour, that figure determines how much the client pays. One industrious Parkhill employee apparently worked five successive days of 17.75, 17.5, 17, 16.5 and – knocking off early – 13.25 hours, all personally signed off by Parkhill's counter-fraud director, Suki Pooni. Staff can average up to 30 hours a week overtime – six hours a day on top of the standard 7.5 – over a whole year.

Takes the biscuit? Ivan Doncaster at Parkhill's Christmas party

Pay costs for the 145 staff totaled £13.3m last year, an average of £90,000 (including employer's national insurance of around £10,000) right down to the lowliest office boy. But it's even better for the top dogs. In 2007 Pooni moved from being a standard NHS employee to a £140,000-a-year consultant, while Ivan Doncaster's wife, Sheila Tunstall, was put in charge of Parkhill's other line of business – NHS beancounter recruitment– for which she receives £150,000 a year through a company owned by her and her husband.

CANCER CARE

Told you so

THE Welsh Assembly was warned two years ago that relying on charities to supply cancer units with specialist nurses and other vital services could be risking disaster. And so it has come to pass: Cancer Care Cymru has folded due to lack of funds, leaving specialist cancer care nurses out of a job and patients deprived of their help.

Ten specialist nurses provided by the charity worked their final shifts at the Velindre NHS Trust's Cancer Centre in Cardiff this month, leaving the hospital unable to offer patients the emotional support and well-informed advice on which they depended. The hospital says it simply cannot afford to replace the nurses.

The Velindre Trust warned the assembly's health and social services committee in 2007 of the danger of relying on the voluntary sector without having a strategy to ensure the funding of vital posts. "If voluntary organisations and charities disappear, they would leave a deficit of at least £2m for funding key professional support staff for Velindre Cancer Services alone," the trust said. "Clear strategic planning is needed to define what the NHS will fund and what is to be left to outside agencies."

In a separate submission to the committee, consultant oncologist Dr Malcolm Adams, Velindre's medical director, wrote: "There is a vital role for specialist nurses in cancer management and palliative medicine. These posts are predominantly supported by charity. The funding of such posts needs to be made within a strategic framework."

The message evidently hit home with the committee. Its report, *Review of Cancer Services for the People of Wales*, concluded that charity funding did indeed need to be put "on a more stable footing that reflects more equitably the extent to which the sector provides services which would otherwise fall to the NHS". But that was two years ago. When Cancer Care Cymru announced in June that fundraising had been hit by the recession and that it would have to close, there was still no strategy in place to maintain the nurses' vital work.

HEALTH CHECKS

CT scandal

"CHECK you're as well as you feel," says Lifescan, the self-proclaimed leading independent provider of CT health checks, which has provided "peace of mind to over 60,000 people".

Not to 61-year-old Ian Craine, a retired solicitor who, on the advice of his GP paid Lifescan £595 for a whole body CT scan at its centre in Tunbridge Wells. This included a "virtual colonoscopy" to investigate his tiredness, weight loss, abdominal pain and occasional rectal bleeding.

Lifescan claims its "images are so detailed, our Consultant Radiologists can check for early signs of a range of illnesses, including heart disease, lung cancer, colon cancer, aortic aneurysms or osteoporosis – even before there are any symptoms". So Mr Craine was greatly relieved when, in October 2007, the Lifescan report, although pointing out problems with the colonoscopy which reduced its accuracy, concluded that there were no obvious abnormalities and that he didn't have to return for another health check for five years.

With worsening symptoms his GP sent him to Brighton Hospital five months later, where an old-fashioned NHS rectal examination found that he had a bowel tumour. After surgery, radiography and chemotherapy, Mr Craine is now clear of the cancer. But after diagnosis, his GP voiced concerns over the Lifescan report. Initially, Lifescan clinical director Dr John Giles acknowledged that the imaging had been "extremely difficult to interpret". He said that while there was "no evidence of any significant obstructing tumour… with the benefit of hindsight there is probably an area of thickening on the posterior rectal wall, largely obscured..." In retrospect he concluded that Mr Craine "should have been offered a repeat scan".

When Mr Craine himself complained to Lifescan, he was reminded that he had signed a consent form which accepted that no scan was "100 percent effective". Dr Giles was making no admission of liability, said Lifescan's chief operating officer, Claire Barlow. He had been "expressing a personal view with the benefit of hindsight".

However, when the *Eye* contacted Lifescan last week, Dr Giles said that it had now decided to refund the scan fee "as a gesture of goodwill".

MEDICAL SCHOOLS

Imperial folly

MEDICS at London's Imperial College fear that the university hasn't properly considered the impact of swingeing academic job cuts on the NHS hospital that is home to what claims to be one of the world's leading medical schools.

Imperial announced in July that it planned to cut 80 academic posts, plus 50 technicians and admin staff, after the faculty lost £5m in funding from the Higher Education Funding Council after a poor showing in the 2008 research assessment exercise.

It was only this March that Imperial became the first Academic Health Science Centre (AHSC), the government's new wheeze for bringing universities and NHS hospitals closer together and "running them hand-in-hand to provide the best healthcare in the world". When the Imperial AHSC launched, it claimed to be "bringing clinical and academic management together in a way that is unprecedented in the UK health system — this creates new opportunities for all our staff to progress their careers and become leaders of their fields."

But notes from a meeting of British Medical Association (BMA) members reveal that the NHS health trusts connected with Imperial are unlikely to be able to take on any of doctors who are made redundant by the university, due to their own financial woes. The doctors at the meeting also raised concerns about the "impact on training and service delivery" and noted a "lack of co-ordination between the college and the NHS". They also criticised the college for being too focused on "prestige projects" instead of maintaining the team of clinical academics needed to support an AHSC.

While the BMA stressed that the meeting notes were "not necessarily the agreed view of the BMA", Dr Hamish Meldrum, chair of the BMA Council, has written to Imperial "expressing concern" at the proposals. Staff have until the middle of this month to apply for voluntary redundancy.

OUT-OF-HOURS GPs

It shouldn't happen to a vet…

THE absence of out-of-hours GP care in the Scottish Highlands has led concerned residents in Kinloch Rannoch to submit an "E-Petition" to the Scottish parliament, demanding proper medical provision before a life is lost unnecessarily.

A year ago *Eye* 1221 reported that Tayside Health Board had opted for a team of volunteers, trained by an outfit called First Response, to cover nights and weekends. Scottish health minister Nicola Sturgeon has happily endorsed this cheap scheme, no doubt because it had the backing of Scotland's Centre for Rural Health, a research institute which promotes entrepreneurship, self-care and e-health for those living in remote areas.

One volunteer in far-flung Achiltibuie is vet Iain Muir. In the petition he says that about half those originally offering their free GP substitute services had already dropped out "because many felt they could not provide what was needed". They were "not trained to take a pulse, not trained to lift and carry, and not allowed to give anything, not even aspirin for pain relief, and they've had some hellish situations to deal with."

If he were to offer his animal patients the level of care now offered to humans, he writes, "I would be up before the disciplinary committee of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and could expect to be suspended or struck off."

In the City

THE missing X-factor in the now very public high-stakes poker game between BAE Systems and the Serious Farce Office is the US department of justice (DoJ), which has not only been investigating the Saudi arms deal that the SFO was warned off but also has jurisdiction over all the other bribes BAE handed out in South Africa, Tanzania, the Czech Republic, Romania, Qatar and Chile.

BAE has been keen to negotiate a global settlement that would bring an end to all the corruption inquiries – including those in the Czech Republic, Austria, Sweden and Switzerland. It also wants to do so without having to plead guilty to corruption or perhaps even be charged with corruption, as this could create major problems in the crucial and highly lucrative US defence market. A deal with the SFO, even on non-Saudi bribes, could make fending off the Americans difficult. So any deal with the SFO cannot be in isolation.

"This new gun fires large amounts of money at people"

The justice department moved in almost three years ago when the SFO was pressured into dropping the Al-Yamamah case by Tony Blair, who caved in to blackmail from Saudis not wanting details of their Swiss bank accounts revealed and the extent to which they pillage their kingdom. Because many of the payments involving Prince Bandar, son of the Saudi defence minister, went through US bank accounts, the DoJ had immediate jurisdiction. It also has the right to police BAE because it is trading on Wall Street.

The justice department has ramped up anti-corruption prosecutions in the past five years, targeting not just US but also foreign companies. Last December the German giant Siemens agreed the largest fine ever – $450m – to make a bribery problem go away. Siemens also agreed to settle with the Securities & Exchange Commission by disgorging profits of $350m. Both deals were choreographed with a parallel deal in Germany, which saw Siemens pay another $569m to settle a Munich prosecution.

Siemens 'fessed up to paying bribes around the globe totalling more than $1.4bn – very much in the BAE league. Crucially, Siemens did not plead guilty to bribery and was never charged with it. Instead it pleaded guilty to bad bookkeeping – violating the internal controls and books and records provisions of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. Three subsidiaries did also plead guilty to breaching anti-bribery provisions.

Ever since that deal was done, SFO insiders have suggested that BAE was looking to cut a similar deal to solve its own problems. As with Siemens, it has cleansed the board of key figures who presided over the bribes era and claimed to be a changed company, helped by Lord Woolf's whitewash review of its procedures. Better yet, BAE would like a deferred prosecution agreement whereby it would agree not to sin again and to be monitored as to its future behaviour in return for paying a huge fine and seeing the potential charges dropped after maybe three years. KPMG did such a deal in 2005 – paying $456m – to avoid following Arthur Andersen into extinction.

In the case of Siemens and contractors Kellogg Brown & Root (KBR), plus its former parent company Halliburton, which paid fines and penalties of $579m last February to settle bribery charges relating to Nigeria after KBR pleaded guilty, there was no question about whether this was a "misuse of shareholders' funds" as has been suggested by BAE for the reason it rejected an SFO offer to settle for £300m. Paying such a fine and being able to continue in business would be a good deal, compared with the costs of a trial and a conviction with its implications for future contracts if not in Britain, where BAE is too big to fail or ignore, but in the US.

SFO director Richard Alderman likes the idea of deferred prosecution agreements. He cut a similar deal with contractor Balfour Beatty a year ago over bribery to obtain an Egyptian contract. Balfour Beatty admitted bad bookkeeping, agreed to external monitoring and paid £2.25m to avoid prosecution. The SFO also persuaded bridge builders Mabey & Johnson of the benefits of pleading guilty to corruption; the firm agreed to pay £6.5m in fines and penalties last month. Both deals avoided the uncertainty and cost of trials.

But Alderman knows BAE is in a different league and has many friends in Whitehall and Westminster who are already lobbying hard and suggesting that Britain's main master of war is under threat if prosecuted or heavily fined. A similar bluff about Saudi non-co-operation worked. Alderman also knows that obtaining a conviction on bribery charges could be difficult. It would be necessary to prove where the bribery took place and who the "controlling mind" was among the assorted directors and executives.

Also, like the ill-fated National Health Service generic drugs price-fixing case, any prosecution could run and run for years, costing a fortune – the SFO has already spent more than £4m on BAE – with no certainty as to the outcome. Little, if any, cooperation would be likely from the South African government over that part of any prosecution, given the role played by leading ANC figures in the £115m that BAE handed over through its agents – which is why the SFO was prepared to offer a deal. But BAE clearly feels it still has cards to play that could earn a better deal.

A year before concluding its US plea bargain, Siemens negotiated a settlement with the Munich prosecutors under which it agreed to pay $287m over the bribery by its telecoms division to win contracts. This deal made fighting the other, wider corruption charges more difficult. Similarly, any deal between BAE and the SFO would probably ensure a consequent settlement with the US justice department, which would also rather deal than fight.

However, the SFO would not want to have BAE cut a deal in Washington first. A US settlement – especially if accompanied by a big fine – could make it difficult for the SFO to meet the "public interest" justification for continuing with a costly prosecution here, especially if BAE, like Siemens, effectively admitted to bribery worldwide by the former regime. The SFO is reported to be offering to help the Justice Department build such a case, when it has never helped on the Saudis. But the Americans may not need SFO help if BAE blows the whistle on itself.

The BAE ball is now in the attorney general Lady Scotland's court, but there could be plenty of time for further poker playing between when (and even perhaps if) she agrees to a corruption case going ahead, over some of (if not all) the targets, and when charges are filed. During that time, BAE could still come up with a number that would send the SFO and the justice department home happy and allow the defence contractor to continue to do business in both countries.

A YEAR on from the collapse of the three major Icelandic banks, not everyone involved appears to be having a tough time.

Angry Icelanders will no doubt enjoy hearing that a small team from Kaupthing's London office were spotted at the Monaco Yacht Show last month meeting and greeting the super-yacht brigade during the three-day "recession – what recession?" annual bash.

Kaupthing was big in the super-yacht financing business, providing loans for Russian and Saudi buyers. So presumably the Kaupthing team was looking for buyers rather than borrowers to justify the expense of their trip. No doubt by accident, one of the yachts in Monaco was the *Nomad*, 70 metres of floating luxury that was acquired in 2007 for $63m with the help of $50m from Kaupthing. It is now on offer at $61m, down from an initial asking price of $69m.

Kaupthing's client is said to have been one of the Seissembayev brothers behind Kazakhstan's Alliance Bank, which had to be rescued by the government earlier this year. A deal on restructuring Alliance's $4bn debts is ongoing. Kaupthing is reckoned to have put up further loans for another yacht (€15m) and a helicopter for the Seissembayev brothers.

Strangely, none of this exposure appears in the Wikileaked copy of Kaupthing's large exposures, prepared in September last year before the bank collapsed.

GRESHAM Limited, the company used by "Fast Eddie" Davenport, the pretend peer but all-too-real conman, to promise loans that never materialise via advertisements in the *Financial Times*, has pulled off an amazing disappearing assets trick.

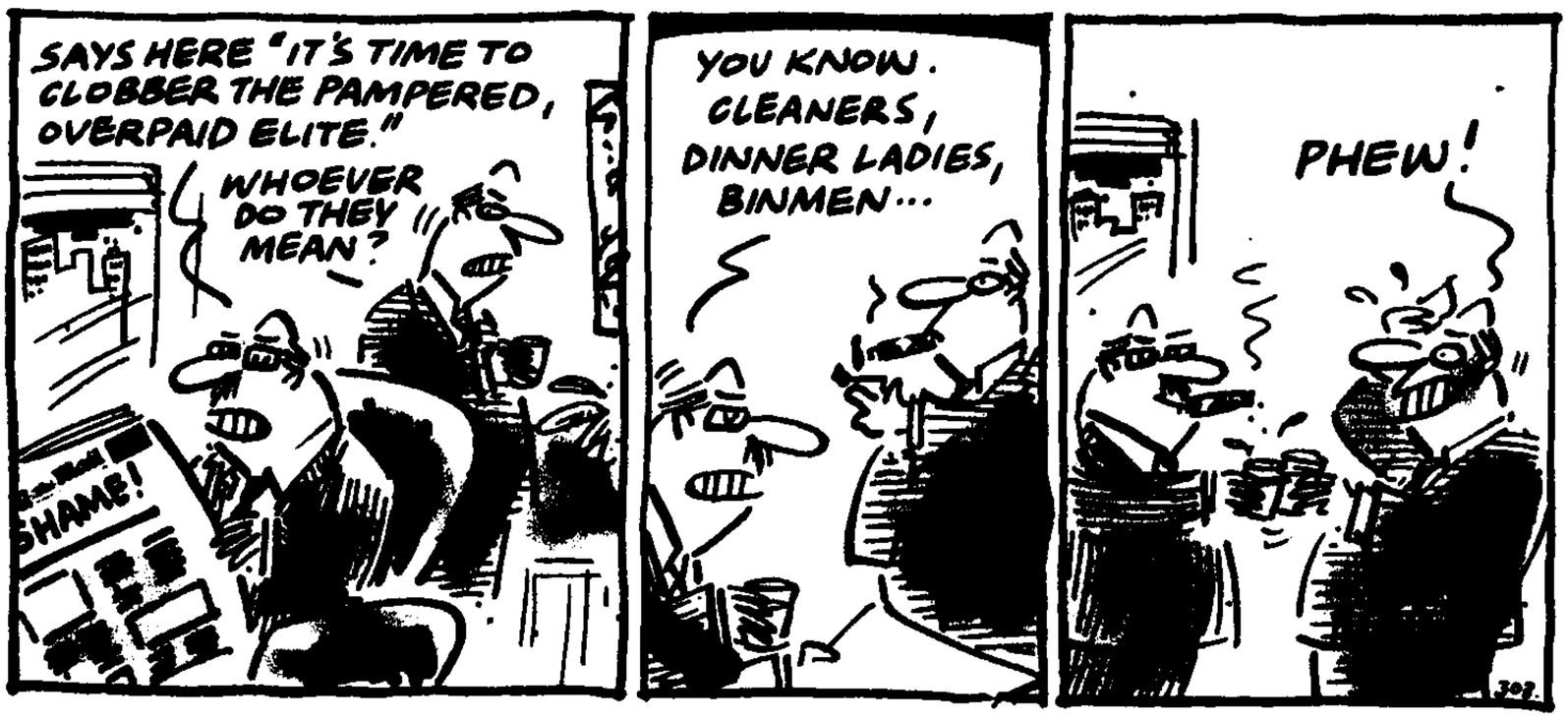
Since May it has produced three sets of accounts covering 2006 to 2009, during which its "assets" have gone from £39m – all supposedly held through companies on the Caribbean tax haven of Nevis – to minus £400,000! And all without any explanation, because the accounts are in the abbreviated form allowed for "small" companies. Well, Gresham is certainly now that. What happened to the "investments" that Gresham claimed were worth £39m in 2006? These were slashed to first just £2m and then zero. Against that, creditors were owed £440,000 as at last month.

All three accounts were prepared without the benefit of an audit, so just who produced these numbers is unclear. Accountants Charles Lovell, who were purported to have signed those asset-rich 2006 accounts, denied doing so (*Eye*

☛ *See over...*

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE & RIGG


SAYS HERE "IT'S TIME TO CLOBBER THE PAMPERED, OVERPAID ELITE."
WHOEVER DO THEY MEAN?
SHAME!
YOU KNOW. CLEANERS, DINNER LADIES, BINMEN...
PHEW!

1189). The Gresham directors are currently an Italian-based Romanian and a small insurance-broking company based at a business park in Warrington. A director using the same address arrived and left within a month in August.

Davenport's problems with auditors are not surprising. Last month the Institute of Chartered Accountants took action against Huntley Farrar, which had supposedly audited Eddie's property con Southern Cross Group, which collapsed in 2005. The ICA action followed information provided by the Companies Investigation Branch of the Insolvency Service. Huntley Farrar was severely reprimanded and fined £9,000, partner Robert Watson ditto and fined £2,000, and another partner, Barry Early, fined £3,000 and struck off.

Not only had the auditors accepted in its 2003 accounts that Southern Cross had assets of £55m – all offshore-owned and ultimately found to be non-existent – but Early also sent 21 references to those doing business with Eddie and his company stating that it was sound when he had no evidence.

PLANET FOOTBALL

Fulham

THE phony pharaoh's club has a mysterious new lender.

Birsket Holdings SA from the British Virgin Islands – also home to the club's parent company, AIT Leisure, and its main funder, Fulham Leisure Holdings – made a secured loan to the club in August.

No details of the amount involved are disclosed, but the loan ranks behind that from Fortis Bank but not other borrowings. It remains to be seen whether this is yet another arm of the Fayed empire making an inter-group loan or an independent source of new funds.

Chelsea

SOME kind of corporate reconstruction seems to be under way at Stamford Bridge. A new Chelsea Limited has been created, while the former Chelsea Limited was renamed Fordstam in August.

Owner Roman Abramovich controlled the club by owning all the shares in the old Limited. Why the change is not yet clear.

Portsmouth

THE rescue deal for Portsmouth with Saudi businessman Ali al-Faraj may have gone through, but what about the nearby land which it was assumed was part of the deal, as it is needed for a required replacement for Fratton Park?

The land is owned through a separate company, Miland Development (2004). But whereas Portsmouth's former owner, Alexandre Gaydamak, has now left the club board, he is still a Miland director. Furthermore, two new directors joined Miland last month – one-time investment banker Glenn Cooper and South African Bruce Vandenberg, the club's former chief operating officer, who is in business with Portsmouth director Roberto Avondo. Activist investor Cooper masterminded the Manchester United flotation in 1991 and took a failed run at Vodafone two years ago.

Gaydamak was reportedly prepared to hand over Miland if failed buyer Sulaiman al-Fahim had taken care of all the club's debts. But now, with Saudi millions in play, it seems a different game may be on.

'Slicker'

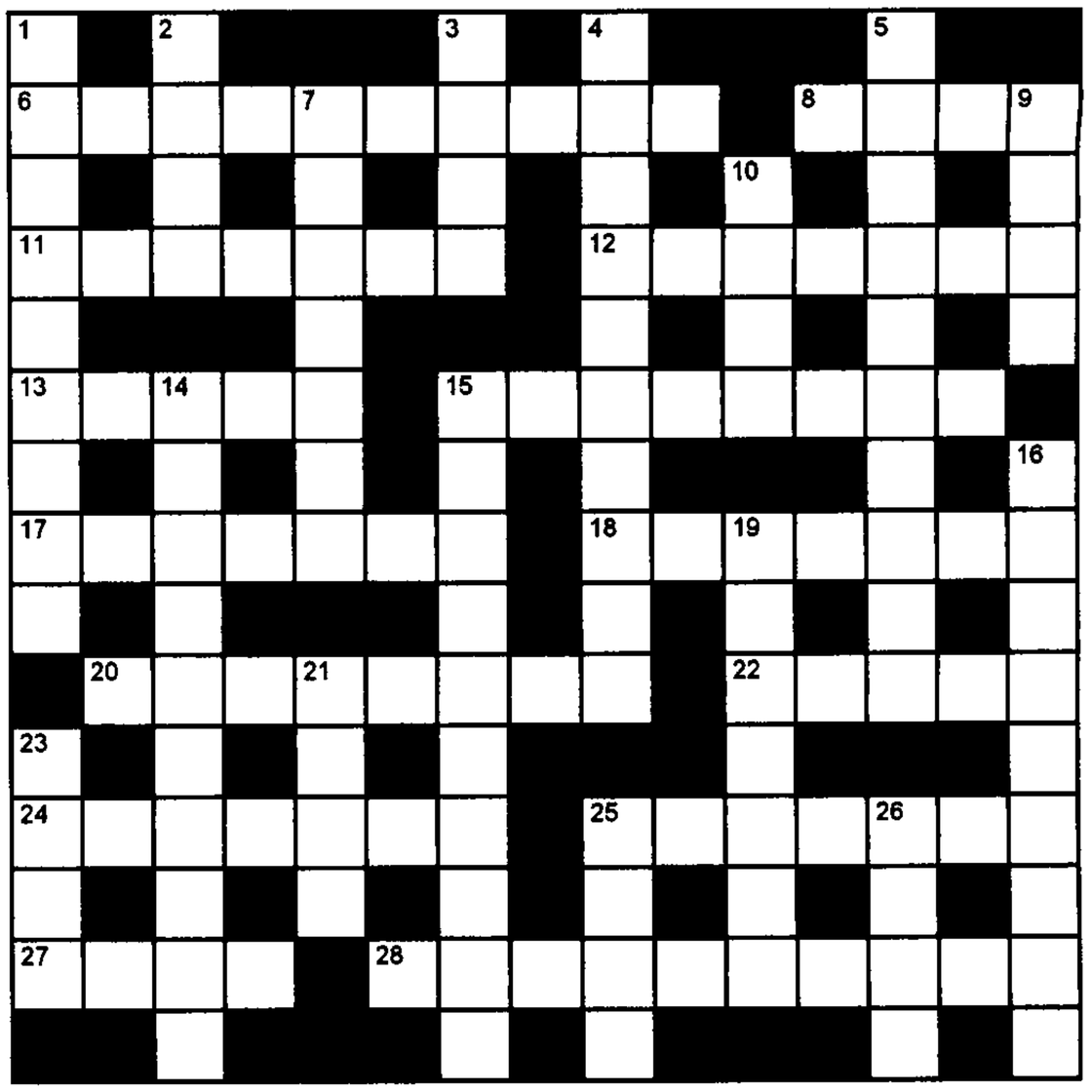
NUMBER CRUNCHING

£16bn Amount Gordon Brown claims he can raise from sale of public assets

£8bn Amount the UK gold reserves that Brown sold off for £2bn a decade ago would be worth now

EYE CROSSWORD 402

by Cyclops



£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 23 October 2009

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk

ACROSS

6 Mug putting money in the bank – like the actions of politician after ballsing up? (4-6)

8/3 Electorate once embracing Gordon's debut – unpleasant after-effects! (8)

11 Once, Di's last bits of cash grabbed by Charles and mother finally (7)

12 Tarts would hold one in motorised caravan for johns (7)

13/15ac. The PM, "pants" according to Obama – such times are very scary (5,8)

17 Erection's occurred, but makes a mess of it (5,2)

18 Blow lid on useless, naff Conservative leaders – "surplus to requirements" (7)

20 Windy thing destroying article about "finish of Cameron" (8)

22 Political body that's no stranger to spin (5)

24 Under the table, sex all used up? (3,2,2)

25 Light shining round hole produces ridicule (7)

27 See 10dn.

28 Snooker event well behind? Get lost! (4,2,4)

DOWN

1 Quick gain – throw up after a diet! (1,4,4)

2 Cane remedy for adolescent outbursts (4)

3 See 8ac.

4 Manufactured item ready for sale is shit? (3,7)

5 "Cabbie stress" Cyclops had, flower (4,6)

7 Deputies such as Prescott's post-dessert treat? (7)

9 See 25dn.

10/27 Awful, what peers do with a no. 2 (Brown's no. 2) (4-4)

14 Kissing so, with an erection, copper mounts Joy, topless (10)

15 Do this with Brown and row will ensue (3,3,4)

16 Could be Brucie's now kissing butts of Arlene and partner (9)

19 Er, short knight in lacy creation, mud-slinging (7)

21 Labour's last uncertainty: time for a split (4)

23 Shit, shit! Palin's only just started! (4)

25/9 To endure flatulence, pee at the final second (4-4)

26 Gore on recycling can be a bit of a bastard (4)

Crossword 401 winner: J. JAMES (Paignton)

ACROSS: 7 Ghoul 8 Beach ball 9 Better off 10 Tasty 11 Hits out 12 Nostril 20 Eardrop 21 Who's who 23/15 Jimmy Riddle 25 Wait for it 27 Hoodwinks 28 Erect.

DOWN: 2/22 Blue-collar worker 3 Half-one 5 Bass drum 6 Play 7 Gab 8 Blotto 11/4 Horse shit 13 School fees 14 Lasso 16 Dartmoor 18 Upswing 19 Swains 23/17 John Thomas 24 Yawn 26/1 Tit for tat.

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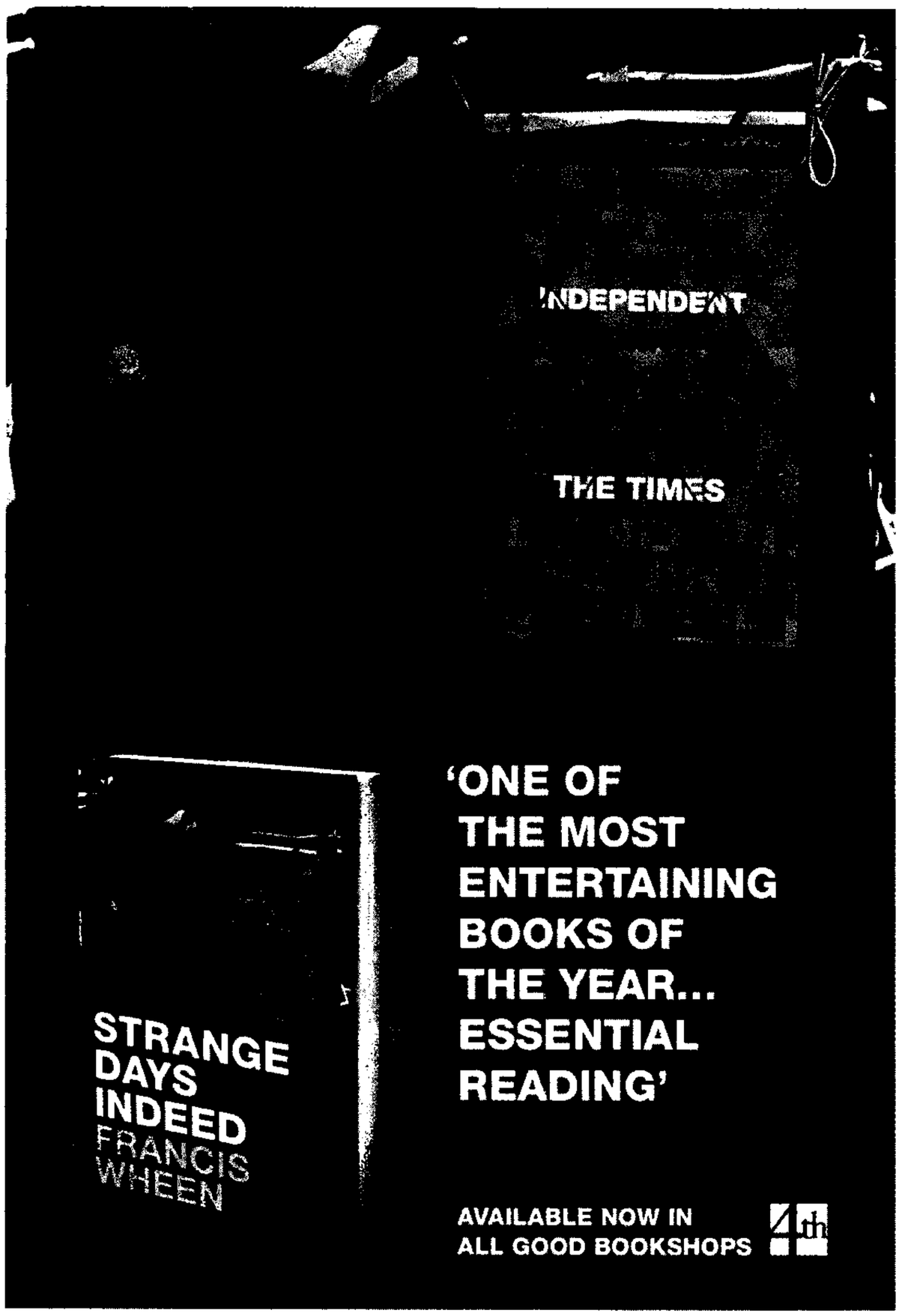
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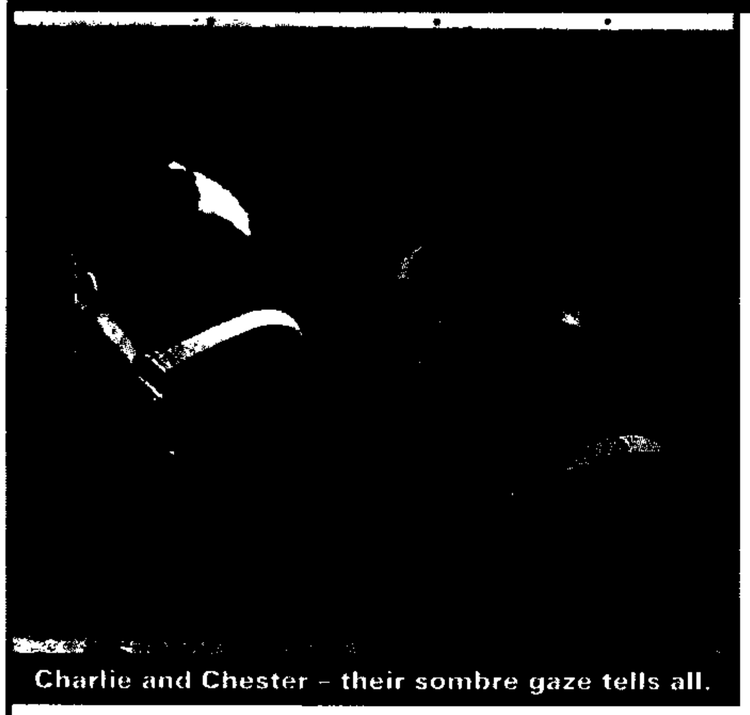

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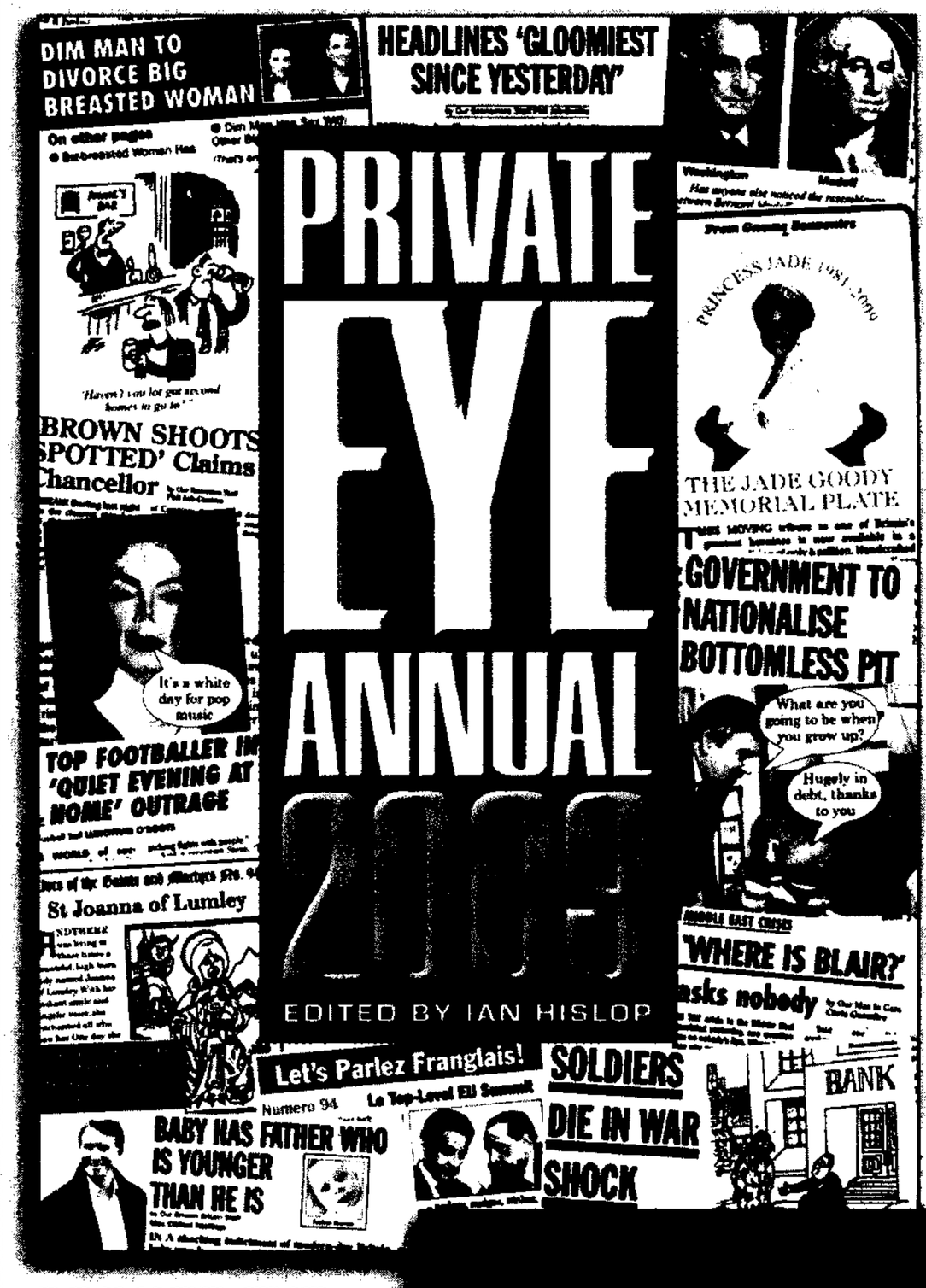
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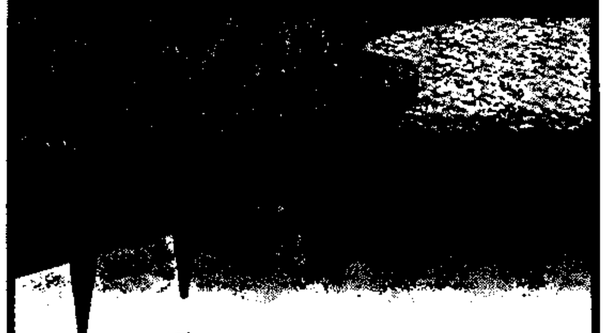

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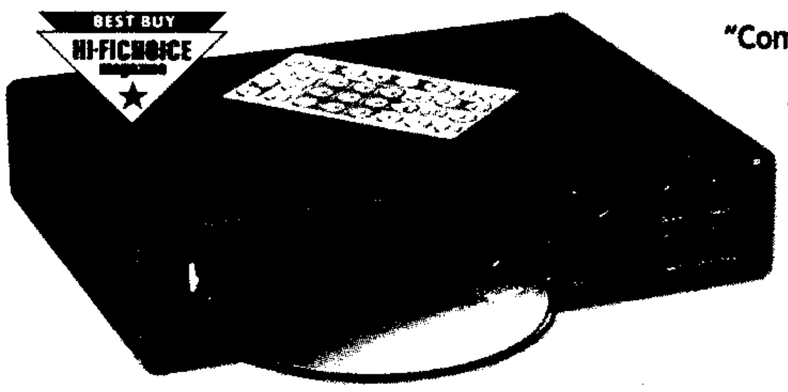

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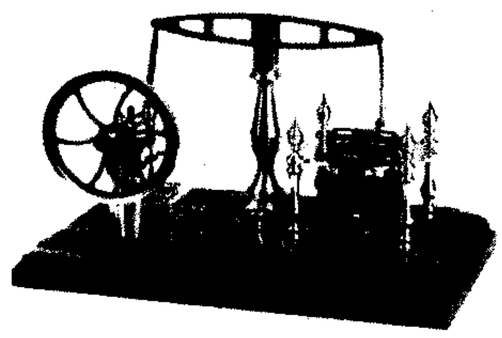

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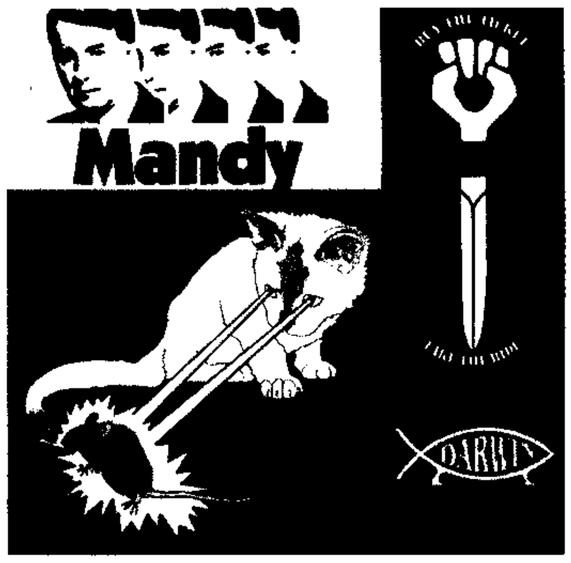

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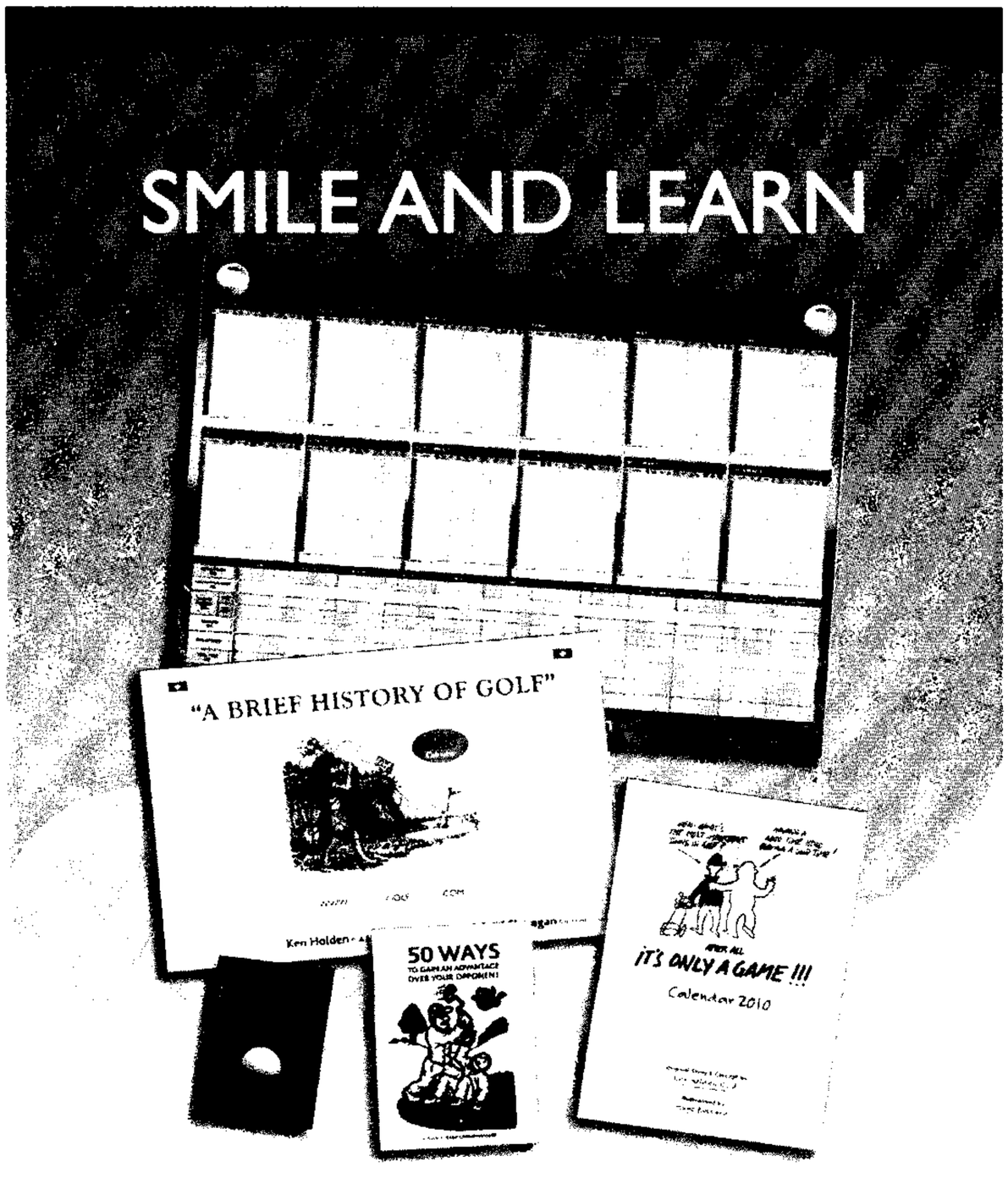

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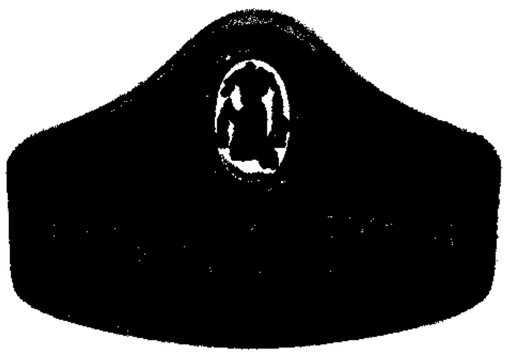

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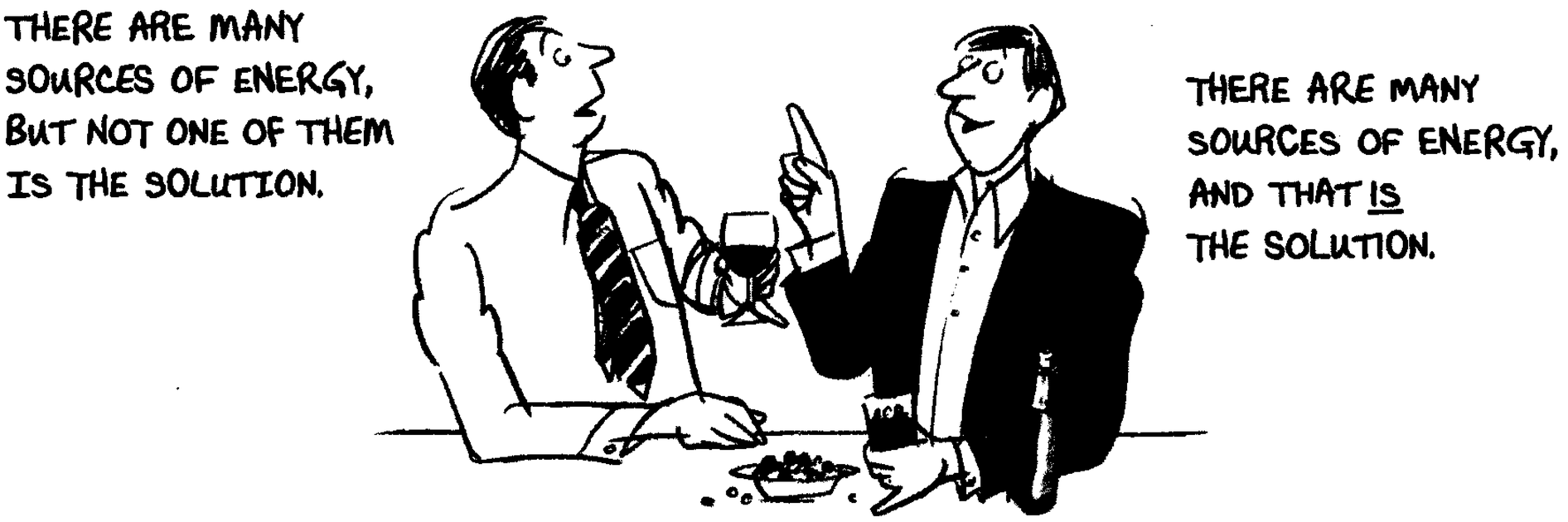
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